



## **Final Close-Out Report to USAID**

Cooperative Agreement: #AID-168-A-11-00002

**Conflict Management and Mitigation Program (CMM)**

“Youth Building Futures in the Brčko District” (YBFBD)

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Multi-ethnic groups of young women and men worked and studied together to improve their communities.

Submitted by:

- YouthBuild International (Recipient)
- Center for Sustainable Development (Sub-Recipient)
- PRONI Center for Youth Development (Sub-Recipient)

Written and Compiled by

- Peter Twichell, Regional Program Director, YouthBuild International
- Edin Mujacic, Chief of Party, Center for Sustainable Development
- Katarina Vukovic, Deputy Chief of Party, PRONI

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*“The project has empowered us: if capable and strong young people decide to move and take an action and to influence those who are decision makers, we can make many changes.”-- YBFBD participant*

## Executive Summary

YouthBuild International with its local partners— Center for Sustainable Development (CSD), PRONI Centre for Youth Development—implemented Youth Building Futures in the Brčko District (YBFBD), a 32-month project, to increase the economic prospects, civic engagement, and peace-building skills for 400, 16-30 year old, women and men by engaging them in community building projects that directly improve the lives of citizens in the Brčko District and surrounding municipalities. In April 2011, USAID invested \$1,173,559 into the implementation of YBFBD.

The project's theory of change focused on building *Healthy Relationships* as the most relevant conflict mitigation and reconciliation intervention to address the human, historical, and war related dynamics in Bosnia and the Brčko district. Toward this end, the project fostered change in youth participants across cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions, by providing a series of organized forums for group interaction that were fun, engaging, creative, and provided concrete opportunities for practical learning, skills training, and the co-creation of valued community assets in the Brčko district. In the evaluation, 91% of students interviewed said “making friends and expanding social relations” was a central value of the project.

The goals of YBFBD were:

- Build tangible community improvements in the Brčko district engaging multi-ethnic teams of marginalized young people;
- Increase the economic security of unemployed youth through technical skills training, educational reinforcement, livelihood development, and positive engagement with their communities;
- Demonstrate the benefits of cooperative, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, community building for conflict mitigation, reconciliation, and prevention;
- Test, evaluate and codify a unique conflict mitigation model in the Brčko district that could be expanded to other parts of BiH.

Notable outcomes were:

- 667 young people applied to the program and 441 were enrolled (10% above the target), 48% were women;
- 86% of enrollees completed the program;
- Of those who completed, 65% improved their livelihood prospects including 92 (20%) who found formal sector jobs , 27 who found apprenticeships, and 128 who completed internships;
- 29 (7%) graduates are volunteering at NGOs or other civic organizations;
- 163 participants (37%) completed intensive specialized livelihood training after the program and 139 (32%) completed entrepreneurial training;
- 46 local public and private companies provided jobs and internships to participants;
- 40 graduates returned to complete a rigorous, intensive training to become Peer Peace Builders with a more advanced focus on reconciliation;
- 23 playgrounds and sports parks were upgraded or rebuilt;
- 11 elementary schools and high schools were repaired and improved;

- One large, new playground was built in the heart of Brčko in the central city park drawing on the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) to create a community resources that is calming and restorative to citizens;
- Participants contributed 50,000 hours of service building community assets with a value of \$115,626 calculated at the local minimum wage;
- Nearly \$100,000 in non-federal cost share was contributed to the project by local business, municipal officials, individuals, and private foundations;
- 91% of graduates say the project's approach was relevant to their lives and communities;
- 91% participants surveyed in the evaluation say a key value of the program was "making friends and expanding social relations"
- 70% of graduates are civically active following the program compared with 78% of applicants who reported no experience with the civic sector;
- 60% of participants ranked community asset building and "practical work" as the most important aspect of the program;
- 73% judged YBFBD to be effective or highly effective;
- 250 individuals visit the project Facebook page each week while 1,277 actively follow the page in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Turkey, Austria, and the U.S.
- As an epilogue to YBFBD, in the months following the end of the program, many graduates continued their commitment to taking responsibility for their communities by joining flood recover efforts.

The project evaluation concluded:

YBFBD demonstrated that YouthBuild's distinctive approach can be successfully adapted to an operational setting as challenging as Brčko and BiH. According to YB's theory of change, young people learn to internalize a sense of personal and civic responsibility less via seminars and roundtables than direct, hands-on practice. Through taking on tasks that teach by doing, through contributing to the production of tangible outputs that improve the lives of others, young people gain a sense of personal and collective efficacy that makes them more resilient, persevering and engaged.( In the words of one participant,. "The project has empowered us : if capable and strong young people decide to move and take an action and to influence those who are decision makers, we can make many changes." Project experience validated this strategy..

*"I have more enthusiasm for things I do and I got more inspired. I broadened my horizons and moved my boundaries. Youth need to take action in order to get the changes they want. The biggest problem in my community is uninterested young people. One of the things I learned is that we'll be more successful if we are all together, in other words if we unite and learn how to function as one entity. Nothing is impossible if we really want to do something. I have a feeling that things slowly are getting in position to move forward."—YBFBD participant*

## **Overview of the YBFBD Accomplishments, Approach and Activities**

YouthBuild International with its local partners— Center for Sustainable Development (CSD), PRONI Centre for Youth Development—implemented Youth Building Futures in the Brčko District (YBFBD), a 32-month project, to increase the economic prospects, civic engagement, and peace-building skills for 400, 16-30 year old, women and men by engaging them in community building projects that directly improve the lives of citizens in the Brčko District and surrounding municipalities.

In April 2011, the American people made an investment of \$1,173,559 through USAID into the development of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over the past 32 months, this investment has paid numerous dividends. A summary of outcomes include:

- 667 young people applied to the program and 441 were enrolled (10% above the target), 48% were women;
- 86% of enrollees completed the program;
- Of those who completed, 65% improved their livelihood prospects including 92 (20%) who found formal sector jobs , 27 who found apprenticeships, and 128 who completed internships;
- 29, (7%) are volunteering at NGOs or other civic organizations;
- 163 participants (37%) completed intensive specialized livelihood training after the program and 139 (32%) completed entrepreneurial training;
- 46 local public and private companies provided jobs and internships to participants;
- 40 graduates returned to complete a rigorous, intensive training to become Peer Peace Builders with a more advanced focus on reconciliation;
- YBFBD upgraded 23 playgrounds and sports parks;
- 11 elementary schools and high schools were repaired and improved by YBFBD;
- One large, new playground was built in the heart of Brčko in the central city park drawing on the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) to create a community resources that is calming and restorative to citizens;
- Participants contributed 50,000 hours of service building community assets with a value of \$115,626 calculated at the local minimum wage;
- Nearly \$100,000 in non-federal cost share was contributed to the project by local business, municipal officials, individuals, and private foundations;
- 91% of graduates say the project's approach was relevant to their lives and communities;
- 91% participants surveyed in the evaluation say a key value of the program was "making friends and expanding social relations"
- 70% of graduates are civically active following the program compared with 78% of applicants who reported no experience with the civic sector;
- 60% of participants ranked community asset building and "practical work" as the most important aspect of the program;
- 73% judged YBFBD to be effective or highly effective;
- 250 individuals visit the project Facebook page each week while 1,277 actively follow the page in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Turkey, Austria, and the U.S.
- As an epilogue to YBFBD, in the months following the end of the program, many graduates continued their commitment to taking responsibility for their communities by volunteering in the flood recover efforts.



## YBFBD Program Goals

- Build tangible community improvements in the Brčko district engaging multi-ethnic teams of marginalized young people;
- Increase the economic security of unemployed youth through technical skills training, educational reinforcement, livelihood development, and positive engagement with their communities;
- Demonstrate the benefits of cooperative, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, community building for conflict mitigation, reconciliation, and prevention;
- Test, evaluate and codify a unique conflict mitigation model in the Brčko district that could be expanded to other parts of BiH.



Participants upgraded schools as part of the community asset building activity

## YBFBD Theory of Change

The YBFBD project's theory of change focused on building *Healthy Relationships* as the most relevant conflict mitigation and reconciliation intervention to address the human, historical, and war related dynamics in Bosnia and the Brčko district. YBFBD fostered change in youth participants across cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions, by providing a series of organized forums for group interaction that are fun, engaging, creative, and provide concrete opportunities for practical learning, skills training, and the co-creation of valued community assets in the Brčko district. USAID's Youth and Conflict Toolbox (2005) has called YouthBuild's theoretical approach "innovative" and said it had shown promise in "reaching out to young people who often are left behind in more traditional development efforts."

## Explanation for the Focus on the Brčko District and Surrounding Municipalities

The 1992-95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina had a catastrophic human toll. The International Criminal Tribunal of the former Yugoslavia estimated the number of dead or missing at 102,000. According to the UN High Commissioner on Refugees, the war displaced 1.1 million people within Bosnia and forced another 1.2 million people to seek refuge in other countries.<sup>1</sup> The consequence of mass population displacement and the division of Bosnia into the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska (RS) under the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement has been the "territorialization of ethnicity."<sup>2</sup> Prior to the war, most municipalities in BiH were multiethnic. The ethnic cleansing during the war largely destroyed this diversity and divided

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1 ICTY and UNHCR statistics summarized in Florence Kondylis, "Conflict-Induced Displacement and Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina," London School of Economics, Center for Economic Performance Discussion Paper No 777 (revised, November 2007): 4.

2 Bieber, Post-War Bosnia, 32.

citizens who had lived side-by-side for generations. These ethnic divisions remain an impediment to the economic, social, and political advancement of BiH.

#### Creation of the Brčko District and Partitioned Towns

The present political divisions of Bosnia and Herzegovina were agreed upon as part the constitution that makes up Annex 4 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace concluded at the Dayton peace conference in November 1995, and subsequently signed in Paris on December 14, 1995. The Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) divides Bosnia and Herzegovina into two entities, the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This line essentially runs along the military front lines as they were at the end of the Bosnian War with some major adjustments (most importantly in the western part of the country, and in and around Sarajevo), made at the Dayton peace conference. With few exceptions, the IEBL has also become the ethnic dividing line in Bosnia. These borders were not determined on natural geographical features of the region. They were postulated as part of the political agreement that was based on ethnic division and now are used to determine the extent of political jurisdictions within the entities.

Many new municipalities were formed as a result of the Dayton-mandated ethnic partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Specifically, 28 of the 109 pre-war municipalities were partitioned, creating 58 partitioned municipalities. These partitioned municipalities not only became geographically smaller, but also more ethnically homogeneous as they became part of the FBiH (30 municipalities) or the RS (28 municipalities). And since the IEBL was drawn to approximate the frontlines of the war prior to the Dayton Accord, partitioned municipalities are also frontline municipalities and relics of the war. Today, sixteen years later, most of these divided municipalities are categorized as either under-developed or seriously under-developed.

The effect of dividing municipalities was especially notable in the Northeast Bosnia—in and around Brčko municipality. Except for the municipality of Bijeljina all others were partitioned during and after the war. For example, the pre-war municipality of Lopare was partitioned, creating the new municipalities of Celic (FBiH – Tuzla Canton) and Lopare (RS) the pre-war municipality of Gradacac was partitioned, creating new municipalities of Pelagicevo (RS) and Gradacac (FBiH – Tuzla Canton). Although these are neighboring communities, with a history of integration, today there is a very low level of interaction between the people, and particularly youth.

At the time of the Dayton Accord, Brčko was also divided between FBiH (two municipalities) and RS (one municipality); but since then Brčko was re-consolidated as the neutral Brčko District as a way to connect Tuzla to Posavina cantons in FBiH and Pelagicevo and Donji Zabar to Lopare and Bijeljina in RS. The Brčko District is established as a model of multiethnic and multicultural unit of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community has made a huge investment into the District to make it a community of tolerance and interaction between different ethnical groups. However donors have given much less attention to the small neighboring divided communities around the multiethnic District. For this reason, YBFBD focused on expanding into these neighboring municipalities in the final eight months of the project..

The internal borders of Bosnia are today less physical markers, but continue to firmly separate political power and cement ethnic divisions. Distrust now prevents divided municipalities from seeking cooperation. As survey for UNDP in 2007 found Bosnia is at the bottom of international leagues on measures of social trust. For example, only 7.8% of surveyed citizens indicate that they trust others, considerably lower than other countries, including those in South Eastern Europe. This low level of trust is transferred to low levels of trust in institutions and low levels of interest in politics, again significantly less than in any other country in the region. What is striking about the UNDP findings is that Bosnia is less characterized by low levels of trust among ethnic groups and more by a general distrust of institutions, the state for example. In other words, distrust among ethnic groups is overshadowed by a general breakdown in trust especially toward the institutions that enable a society to function.

### Brčko to be a Showcase for Inter-Ethnic Cooperation

The Brčko District was the first jurisdiction in BiH to rehire an independent judiciary, to implement modern criminal and civil codes and establish a multiethnic police force. It is the only part of the country not organized on the basis of ethnicity but on the basis of civic principles. Brčko's success has been facilitated by the presence of the International Supervisor.<sup>3</sup> USAID and other donors have supported housing reconstruction efforts, infrastructure improvements and institution building in the District (e.g. Brčko Municipal Assistance Activity project, ICITAP support to BD Police, Brčko Law Revision Commission project).

Though the majority of Brčko District citizens are satisfied with the progress towards community stabilization, they are also very concerned about what the future may bring. The same fears which drove the ethnic conflicts in the 1990's have surfaced in Brčko in the present day and have been sorted out by the Supervisor. For example, Serb high schools students have taken to the streets in protest of having to share their school building with Bosniak students. Brčko's main political parties have worked cooperatively to resolve issues, but have faced pressure from national political parties to take more aggressive stands on ethnic issues. Neither the RS nor officials in the Federation have ever given up their desire to take control of Brčko. It is expected that this pressure will increase with the anticipated end of the Supervisory regime after the October, 2010 elections in BiH. Due to its geo-strategic importance and its success based on civic rather than ethnic principles, Brčko District is a real thorn in the side of all nationalist groups in Bosnia.

### Young People in the Brčko District

Young people feel an overriding sense of exclusion from the Brčko District success story and public life in their community.<sup>4</sup> Programs for young people overall, and particularly programs dedicated to job preparation and employment are scarce in the district.<sup>5</sup> This finding is consistent with the overall lack of economic opportunities for young people in Bosnia. Nationwide, unemployment for economically active young people, ages 15-24, was 47.5 percent

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Raffi Gregorian is the current Brčko Supervisor. All five Brčko Supervisors so far were US diplomats.

<sup>4</sup> According to data of the Employment Service of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina 10,607 persons were registered as unemployed in the Brčko District on 31 December 2009. When looking at the qualification structure of the unemployed, the data of 31 December 2009 indicate that the largest share in registered unemployment is made up of semi-skilled and unskilled labor. Among them young people represent a great portion.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Fares and Erwin Tiongson, "Youth Unemployment, Labor Market Transitions, and Scarring: Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2001-04," World Bank Report No. WPS4183 (April 2007), 17.



in 2008.<sup>6</sup> The Youth Information Agency has reported that 77 percent of the youth want to leave the country.<sup>7</sup>

Experience in many post-conflict countries has shown that if no community integration initiatives for youth are available, young people represent a ready pool of recruits for political leaders with a vested interest in initiating and facilitating violent conflicts. At the same time young people represent the greatest potential

for further development of the Brčko District and sustainability of the Brčko District success story.<sup>8</sup>



Group dynamics in the classroom and on work sites were actively and openly analyzed as part of the program's conflict reconciliation activities

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<sup>6</sup> Bosnia-Herzegovina Agency for Statistics, 2008 Labor Force Survey, Table 3, available at <http://www.bhas.ba/eng/Questionaries.asp?Test=32r5&Rez=1&Pripadnost=5&mode=dark>, accessed May 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Youth Information Agency Bosnia-Herzegovina (OIA), “Independent Evaluation of the National Youth Policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina” (April 2005), 2.

<sup>8</sup> As part of a recent survey conducted by Oxford Research International 3,850 people across the country were asked what they thought was Bosnia’s greatest strength. The most common choice was “young people.”

## Approach

YBFBD, based on the highly successful, 35-year-old YouthBuild model, sought to increase social trust among Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs, between youth and adults, and between women and men through shared efforts to improve communities in the District. The community reconciliation component was both symbolic and tangible as mixed groups of young Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks worked together to upgrade schools, build playgrounds, and plant trees. For the young participants, the project sought to achieve two pillars of conflict mitigation: lifelong economic security and a willingness to take responsibility for the well-being of one's community. In order to diminish a source of future conflict in the Brčko District and deepen the roots of the hopeful post-conflict democratization process in the District, the partners proposed to engage unemployed, out-of-school, disadvantaged, young women and men in an initiative based on the proven YouthBuild principles which include:

- Intensive and comprehensive engagement with young people so that numerous developmental objectives can be pursued simultaneously in a safe, positive learning environment;
- An emphasis on practical skill building using experiential learning techniques along with authentic, meaningful field work;
- Building community assets that puts young people in service to other citizens;
- A focus on building livelihoods and economic security through market-responsive skills training, hands-on practice, and fostering the entrepreneurial instincts in all participants;
- Youth-adult partnerships that are respectful yet demanding and fosters the leadership potential in all young people (YBI defines leadership as *taking responsibility to make things go right for you, your family, your community, your nation, and your planet*);

Drawing on intimate first-hand knowledge of Brčko and Bosnia, the project team concluded that principles of pluralism, inclusion and cooperation were best taught by deed rather than by word. The living example of Serb, Bosniak and Croat youth working as a team to serve the public interest would yield significantly greater dividends than any number of didactic seminars on tolerance and peace building. Following this logic, the project left out references to "reconciliation" in its recruitment and marketing materials. Instead, pride of place was granted to grassroots community practice.

In Brčko, YBFBD established a track record of building social trust among young people from different communities through increasing levels of shared activity among ethnically mixed groups of young people doing community projects for the common good. Youth and community activism and networking clearly helped overcome political tensions by promoting multi-ethnic interaction, confidence-building, and social networking.

## Program Schedule

Group A: 60 Youth in 2, 30-Student Cohorts (Yellow & Green) Alternating Weeks																
Project Week >>>>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Classroom/Counseling Activities	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green				
Hands-On Community Field Work	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow				
Professional Development Placement													Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Professional Development Placement													Green	Green	Green	Green
Planning & Recruitment for Group B													Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue

### Component #1: Classroom Activities

The classroom modules were implemented on the principles of non-formal and social education based on experiences and positive examples from youth work methodology and community work applied in the EU. This methodology included:

- Interactive ways of learning based on the experiential learning cycle;
- Group work,
- Individual work,
- Regular opportunities to take leadership roles;
- Creating a safe space for individual sharing and group dialogue;
- Fostering a sense of responsibility and creativity in all activities;
- Open acknowledgement of conflict, group dynamics, and behaviors;
- Regular reflection on the fundamental principles of human rights.

Classroom activities supported the goals of conflict mitigation and economic security through activities that build new knowledge, skills, and new behaviors in participants. YBFBD classrooms were dynamic, participatory, engaging settings designed to challenge young people. PRONI Brčko staff developed and delivered all planned educational activities on a regular weekly schedule, Monday-Thursday, starting at 09:00 and lasting until 15:00. Curricula were assembled from existing materials (See Attachment 1) for each of the following topics:



1. Soft skills and Communication;
2. Employment Preparation
3. Leadership Skills;
4. Conflict Management;
5. Citizens Activism/Social Change;
6. Time Management;
7. Customer Service Skills

For each group of participants, curricula were adapted according to baseline

**Classroom instruction relied on interactive, experiential, participatory techniques to encourage personal engagement and transformation**

information gathered during enrollment and orientation. All participants completed work that included a mix of theoretical and practical learning, individual and group work, personal reflection and group dialogue. Some lessons included homework and research outside of the program. The classroom also included

### Livelihood Development

All students completed CVs, life plans, career goals and strategy, and other livelihood supports. These materials were used to help identify their activities in month four of the program where students would pursue jobs, internships, apprenticeships, volunteer opportunities, entrepreneurship training, or specialized technical training. The specialized training was only available to the most motivated, engaged, and productive students. YBFBD paid for these students to be placed into professional development training.

### Conflict Mitigation and Leadership Development

YouthBuild's approach to leadership emphasizes personal responsibility and taking action for positive change. YBFBD incorporated these themes into its conflict mitigation approach encouraging students to become activist for peace. All students practiced project planning, communications, resource development, media relations, and research with an eye toward future activism. PRONI also cooperated with the USAID project *Choosing Peace Together* which brought guest speakers into classroom. These speakers were former war camp prisoners who discussed with students perceptions of war, peace, conflict and BiH's future. Films from the Post Conflict Research Center were shown in class and discussed by participants.



Role playing was used to improve communication skills for team work, job interviews, and peace building

### Support from the Counselor Psychologist

Every group had six group sessions with the counselor/psychologist who was also available to provide individual counseling as a support service to help participants address personal problems and to succeed in the program. During group sessions students worked on prejudices, stereotypes, stress management and time management. Also in each group session they shared their own challenges and concerns. Over the course of the project, the counselor held 42 group sessions, and 32 students used the opportunity to have their own individual session.

### Entrepreneurship Training

Entrepreneurship training aimed to help students to realize opportunities and the importance of cultivating entrepreneurial instincts and ideas for products or services. The practice of writing a business plan provided youth with some of the basic business tools needed to launch a small enterprise. During 16-day training sessions, each group had the opportunity to get familiar with business start-up activities. A big part of training was focused on motivation. On the end of training participants had clear idea of main start up activities are and every participant prepared her/his own simple of business plan. Students got familiar with main economic terms and procedures, preparing of financial reports, but also had opportunity to listen to multimedia





The Peace Wall was posted to encourage a public dialogue

lectures from successful businessmen. The group had the chance to talk with some of guest lecturers about their experience in starting up and sustaining a business.

#### Peer Peace Builders

In early January 2014 the PRONI staff announced an open call to all graduates of YBFBD for additional intensive training. A group of 40 ambitious, engaged graduates was selected to participate in this training. Over the one-month training and additional community service improving a school, a Roma center, and the Municipality's Youth Center, young people strengthened their skills and knowledge related to community organizing, especially related to peace building

activities, community dialogue, and event planning. These graduates received a credential identifying them as "Peer Peace Builders." This group participated in personal reflection, group dialogue, and met with other organizations, institutions, and persons working on conflict resolution. These activists now can both promote conflict mitigation and be local resources to facilitate meetings, workshops, presentations, and other events with their peers. Their first joint activity was participating in the No Hate Speech Campaign by posting a public Peace Wall for Bosnia and Herzegovina where local citizens can write thoughts and comments.

#### Marketing, Branding, and Outreach for Recruitment

PRONI worked on marketing and promoting project activities and promotion of work done with all seven groups of students. Cooperation with local media was intensive and promoted the project to support recruitment, highlighted the achievements of the project, and showcased the partners.

One of the strongest tools of the project was social media. The official project Facebook page, posted regular updates, pictures, news and videos. The page had 1277 active followers and was viewed by an average of 250 people per week. According to Facebook inside info overview on the site's followers, 53 % are female and 45% are male, most of them are between 18 to 24.

Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian and English language were evenly used. Geographic reach was mainly in cities where the project has had activities but there are a significant number of followers from Serbia and other countries like Austria, USA, and Turkey. Additionally the project maintained a blog, Twitter, and YouTube channels. PRONI will maintain all of these accounts going forward.



Presentation, facilitation, public speaking and other leadership skills were at the heart of the YBFBD approach to peace building.

### Student Tracking System to Support Enrollment and Case Management

From the first recruitment PRONI maintained a student tracking system. Through this system the team collected not only basic data on every student, but also other information on each student such as personal goals, achievements, interests, and plans. All 441 students made one year personal plan which was followed through students tracking system and each achievement was marked. Also in this monitoring process project staff offered support in job search, training opportunities and general information of use to students, according to her/his interest and one year plan. A total of 667 young persons applied to the project and 441 were enrolled (52% male and 48% female),



Community service activities were designed to bring participants into contact with beneficiaries.

Personal identity and culture were explored in orientation, group counseling, and in communication classes



## Component #2 Community Asset Building

*“The project has empowered us: if capable and strong young people decide to move and take an action and to influence those who are decision makers, we can make many changes.” --YBFBD participant*

On YouthBuild project sites around the world, young people are building houses, schools, clinics, parks, playgrounds, water systems, and other community infrastructure as they gain work and leadership skills that are essential for personal and economic success. This process, “Community Asset Building,” is central to the YouthBuild program design. CAB facilitates youth and community transformation while catalyzing public and private sector partnerships that sustain community development outcomes. Construction activities take place in the local communities where the young people, their peers, and their families live. As a result, youth see how their individual actions can improve the world around them and local residents witness young people taking responsibility for the development of their own lives and their community. For youth going into the building trades, CAB offers work-based education (WBE) necessary for employment, and for youth focused on non-construction livelihoods it offers a rigorous and comprehensive introduction to the world of work. Successful CAB projects:

- Provide Real-World, Hands-On, Work Experience that Responds to Employer Needs
- Benefit the Community (Not Only Young People)
- Integrate of Soft Skills and Hard Skills
- Engage All Participants and Offers Leadership Roles
- Address Authentic Challenges with Rigorous Effort
- Show Measurable Results
- Link to Classroom-Based Theoretical Learning
- Provide a Transformative Experience for Participants
- Bring Students into Contact with Beneficiaries and Prospective Employers
- Promote Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship
- Unify the institutional interests of government, the private sector, training providers and community-based NGOs.



YBFBD participants upgraded 23 playgrounds

### Summary of Community Asset Building Projects

- Repaired and upgraded 23 sports and children playgrounds
- Upgrade of 11 elementary and high school facilities
- One new children's playground built in the heart of Brčko's city park





**YBFBD playground upgrades used Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts that make neighborhoods safer, calmer, healthier, and more attractive to residents;**

### Preparing for Community Projects

CSD managed all aspects of the community work including identifying projects, securing materials and approvals, conducting environmental surveys, training and equipping participants, monitoring safety precautions, and supervising work. This oversight included arrangements for buying necessary team tools, personal tools and material needed for the work.

### Managing Field Work

In project implementation, all previously

planned activities were successfully completed. Multiethnic groups of participants showed high levels of motivation and interest in the hands-on activities. Because of the positive energy

and attitude almost every community responded positively to the young people and their efforts. The work that young people completed made a great impact on their community and themselves. And the community saw that young people just needed an opportunity to prove themselves.

All field work activities were done in accordance with environmental mitigation instructions. Participants used safety equipment (safety helmet, gloves, glasses, dust masks, overalls), before any work they had safety training, they did not come in contact with any poisons and they disposed of waste and debris according to law.

CSD experts provided technical training on tool use, project planning, coordination, and work assignments. They also did monitoring of progress during every field work in communities and in that process carried out on-site inspections of quality and safety during all field work in every group.

### Community Asset Building Projects by Group

#### *Brčko*

#### First Group:

- 1.Sports playground and park in „Š” settlement in center of Brčko city ( cleaning, painting, setting up new nets, repairing broken benches )
- 2.The fourth elementary school – Sports playground „Partizan” ( cleaning, painting, removing graffiti, setting up new nets, removing graffiti )
- 3.Sports playground „Vermont” ( cleaning, painting, removing graffiti, setting up new basketball hoop )
- 4.Big city park ( cleaning, painting, repairing broken benches )
- 5.Sports playground „Prnjavor” ( cleaning, painting, setting up new basketball nets )
- 6.Sports playground and picnic area „Ficibajer” ( cleaning, painting, , repairing broken benches, afforestation)
- 7.The first elementary school – sports playground ( cleaning, repairing broken benches)



- 8.Sports playground „Solidarnost” ( cleaning, painting, repairing broken benches)
- 9.Youth Center park ( cleaning, painting, repairing broken benches, clearing footpaths and flower gardens)
- 10.Sports playground in the local community „1 Maj” ( cleaning, painting, setting up new nets,)

#### Second Group:

- 1.Sports playground „Partizan” ( cleaning of parking space and locker room, painting locker rooms, setting up new glass on windows, cleaning of high windows in sports hall)
- 2.PRONI center ( cleaning and maintaining of courtyard, painting three rooms and staircase)
- 3.High school locker rooms( cleaning of locker room a sports hall, painting locker rooms, hallways and benches)
- 4.Youth Center ( cleaning, smoothing and painting of two classrooms, toilets, cinema hall, dance hall and hallways around 1400 square meters, cleaning and maintaining of courtyard, cleaning of gutters, repairing broken chairs and desks)
- 5.Snow cleaning in two kindergartens

#### Third Group:



Women and men worked side by side doing rigorous hands-on work.

- 1.The fourth elementary school ( cleaning and painting of sports playground, painting of small sports hall, setting up new basketball board )
- 2.The seventh elementary school – sports playground ( cleaning, painting )
- 3.The tenth elementary school – summer classroom, toilets, sports playground ( cleaning, painting, replacing broken batteries, setting up two new basketball boards)
- 4.The sixth elementary school – classroom ( cleaning, smoothing and painting )
- 5.Sports playground „Prnjavor” ( cleaning, painting, setting up new football goals )

- 6.Childrens playground park in „Š” settlement in center of Brčko city (repeatedly cleaning and mowing around 500 square meters, painting fences, benches, garbage bins, children’s metal train, and swings, setting up three new garbage bins, replacing broken swing benches, painting and setting up new wooden house with slide and new sand pit, setting up new layer of sand and gravel on whole playground )

#### Fourth Group:

- 1.The first elementary school – sports playground ( cleaning, painting, replacing broken benches)
- 2.The fourth elementary school - sports playground, small sports hall and offices ( cleaning and painting of sports playground, smoothing and painting of small sports hall and offices )
- 3.The third elementary school – sports playground ( cleaning, painting, making and setting up of new basketball boards, repairing broken benches )

- 4.The fifth elementary school – sports playground ( cleaning, painting, making and setting up of new basketball boards,)
- 5.Sports playgrounds in local community „Ivici” ( cleaning, painting, setting up new football goals, basketball boards and construction)
- 6.Sports playground „Solidarnost” ( cleaning, painting, setting up new basketball boards)
- 7.Red cross (cleaning and painting storage area and facade, participating in humanitarian actions)
- 8.Youth center and infirmary building (maintaining of green area and cleaning gutters)

#### Fifth Group:

- 1.The second elementary school ( cleaning, smoothing and painting five classrooms )
- 2.The tenth elementary school (cleaning, smoothing and painting one classroom )
- 3.Sports and children playground „Prnjavor” (cleaning, painting and replacing broken benches)
- 4.Sports and children playground „Blatuša” (cleaning, painting and replacing broken benches)
- 5.Sports and children playground „Š” (cleaning, painting and replacing broken benches)
- 6.Sports and children playground „City park” (cleaning, painting and replacing broken benches)
- 7.Sports and children playground „Ficibajer” (cleaning, painting and replacing broken benches)
- 8.Sports and children playground „Partizan” (cleaning, painting and replacing broken benches)
- 9.Kindergarten in „Š” settlement in center of Brčko city (cleaning, painting benches and elements for playing, replacing broken swing seats)

#### Sixth Group:

1. New children’s playground in „City park” ( preparing location, setting up a complete new children’s playground with all elements, setting up protection rubber floor around playing elements, setting up fence, recycling container, replacing broken benches)

#### Seventh Group:

##### *Lopare*

- 1.Elementary school „Priboj” ( cleaning and painting school courtyard and sports playground )
- 2.Elementary school „Lopare” ( painting two school classrooms and sports hall, and )

##### *Čelić*

- 1.Elementary school „Čelić” ( cleaning and painting school courtyard and painting school hallways and cleaning and painting school sports playground )
2. Elementary school „Šibošnica” ( painting schools hall and cleaning and painting school sports playground )

##### *Pelagićevo*

- 1.Elementary school Pelagićevo „Vaso Pelagić” ( painting and cleaning school



YBFBD’s showcase project was a new playground in the heart of Brčko.



Opening day at a new YBFBD playground.

sports playground and schools courtyard )  
2.Elementary school „Čendići”  
( painting complete school )

#### *Gradačac*

1.Elementary school „Vida 1” ( painting and cleaning school sports playground and schools courtyard )  
2.Elementary school „Ivan Goran Kovačić” ( painting of great schools hall )

### **Component #3: Specialized Training, Internships, and Apprenticeships for Livelihoods**

*“If people had jobs, none of this [ethnic tension] would matter; they would be too busy to think about nationalism.”—YBFBD participant*

A total of 280 students completed the internships/work practice and the specialized technical skills training based on their interest, demonstrated capabilities and positive participation in the program. By the end of the program there were 46 different local private and public companies and institutions that offered 128 work practice and internship positions. Certified and licensed, specialized training courses were secured for 163 students.

CSD’s Job Developer organized the specialized training and secured internships in the fourth month of each group for the students from the program and managed all aspects of enrolling, placing and monitoring students.

#### Details by Group of the Trainings, Internships, and other Placements

The following numbers reflects the final selection:

1. Specialized employment skills training courses (163 provided)
2. Internships and work practice (125 provided)

The selection process for these training groups was done according to the analysis and findings from four sources:

1. The student tracking system that gauged overall performance of individuals,
2. Students’ own wishes,
3. Feedback from the local businesses and,
4. YBFBD trainer recommendations.

GROUP A (first group)

- Specialized employment skills training courses (25 provided)
- Internships and work practice (4 provided)

GROUP B (second group)

- Specialized employment skills training courses (23 provided)
- Internships and work practice (9 provided)

GROUP C (third group)

- Specialized employment skills training courses (12 provided)
- Internships and work practice (18 provided)

GROUP D (fourth group)

- Specialized employment skills training courses (17 provided)
- Internships and work practice (24 provided)

GROUP E (fifth group)

- Specialized employment skills training courses (27 provided)
- Internships and work practice (25 provided)

GROUP F (sixth group)

- Specialized employment skills training courses (26 provided)
- Internships and work practice (29 provided)

GROUP G/H (seventh/eight group)

- Specialized employment skills training courses (33 provided)
- Internships and work practice (16 provided)



## Students in their Own Words

### Mirzet Delic (Speaking to the Media at Graduation)

Before I discovered program, I had regular life of a young person in rural area in Bosnia. No job, you have to do everything by your self. I had no opportunity to continue my education so agriculture was my focus.



Then my cousin told me about project and I decided to apply even though my father was against it, since he thought it will be waste of time and will take away my time in working at home. This decision to apply and join changed my life. I got so much, new friends, ideas, possibility to meet people that I had prejudiced toward. Program give me new life. I started school as specialized course, and this is something I could not afford my self ever. For me this was great experience, specially the fact that I had chance to work with people of other religion and ethnic background. I was not having this challenge before, even though Lopare is so close to Čelić.

### Alisa Avdić (Gained Her Peer Peace Builder Certificate and Helped with a No Hate Speech Campaign.)

My friend told me about program, she told me how much she got from the program, skills, people, what they did, how everyone can be useful in community. I love the fact that young people are ready to cooperate, without judgment.

When I look back now I think through classroom work I learn more on public speaking, I am more confident now. This program showed me how an individual person is important for community, and how each person can do something for their own community and them self.



I would love if it was longer, than four month. I would love if we could have more groups, because individual growth that happens to people is life changing and it means community change. More people more activism, more activism more change. And it does not matter if you contribute by participating in project or taking care of environment or making new playgrounds it is important that you do something. I think that one of the biggest problems

of youth in my community is that they are not active. Youth want so many things being done by someone else. They want job, but not any job. Making high criteria in life, most of them are strong in words but no real work. Everyone is talking about change but not everyone wants to make changes. For many young people it is about personal benefit and very few are ready to help the community.

### **Igor Djokic (Fourth from the Left, Shoveled Snow at a School During the Worst Winter in 100 Years in BiH)**

I graduated from the law faculty in 2008. After my graduation I found myself in the same position as other young people in our society, waiting for the job at the Employment Agency. I'd been searching for a job more than a year. I was following all concourses, applying for the jobs but unsuccessfully, for they were all set up and based on the personal connections, nepotism or political connections or bribe. I even got advice to join some political party in order to get a job, what I did, but with no success again. I didn't get a job. I realized how politics could be "dirty" and manipulative and left the political party. General situation in society, endless search for job brought me to the state of lack of will and hopelessness that I could ever get the job and total apathy.

In fall of 2011 I heard of the project and decided to join. To be honest, I didn't expect anything from the project; I was motivated primarily by the stipend of 100 KM per month. However, when I started attending the lectures and the field work, I started to like meeting new people with the same problems as mine and I found new friends. Besides



learning the new skills, such as project proposal writing, writing CV, we were doing something useful for our communities: repairing the playgrounds for kids, painting the schools etc. These all helped us, participants of the project, to get initiated and to change something in our society. Project woke us up in a way and gave us a will to fight for our future. We started some projects by ourselves, started to help others, some of us joined Volunteers of the Red Cross. In every each of us new interests were created: for playing guitar, computer classes... We all forget about various divisions that exist in the society. Participants came from different ethnic groups, different religions, but that didn't bother us at all. Project embraced our mutual problems and it influenced us to get united, so that we can help one another. The best possible thing in this project is that it provides us in fourth month to choose some specialist course, one month of professional practical work or the course how to start up a small business. I personally chose a specialist course in Adobe Web Design that helped me to get my current job. I successfully completed the course for web design, I showed very good knowledge, so the company in which I had my exam offered me a chance to get a job there, since they were lacking lecturers in that field. Project coordinators supported me with the good recommendations they gave to this



company. Besides job opportunity I got, this project activated me, in other words woke me up, and I started participating more in social events and I am trying now to influence some changes in my surrounding, as much as I can. With another few people, we initiated idea for founding the citizen association. (Registration is still in process).

What I can say at the end about the project? Everything the best! I'll list several reasons: the project affected positively young people to get activated, rise their self-confidence, develops awareness on environmental protection, diminishes the differences (national, religious) among people, stimulates young people to be more active in a job search, enables young people to gain new skills and knowledge through specialist courses.

Very often throughout the project and after it's been finished, we were asked what could have been different, what else we would include. As far as I am concerned, this project is great as it is, and it has its function and purpose in this societal context. What I would change: project duration: so that as many young people could participate in the project, and it would be good to provide financial support for those participants who had good business plans. I would particularly give positive feedback to the project leaders, because project success depended on them, and they, together with the lecturers did their job excellent and they were all extremely committed. And at the end I'll stress the fact that before the project, I was jobless and with no hopes for the better future. Now I got the job and I hope for the better future.

### **Adina Halilović**

When I came in the Youth Center, I saw 50 more people and I felt lost. What I am doing among unfamiliar people, I wondered at one time. And so orientation training started and I stopped to think about what I'm doing here and started communicate and participate. I was encouraged to do it. In this program I was given the opportunity to be who I am for first time, to express my opinion and see that there are people similar to me and those who are not. Program showed me that if you want something you have to get up and do it and this will give you results. Nobody's going to knock on your door and offer you a job, money, friendship, love... Stand up and express your opinion is not a bad thing if you're doing it the right way and at the right place.

During the three months of the project a lot was happening. A lot of friendships were made, some love, some conflicts, some have given up and I have changed and become stronger and better prepared for the challenges of life. The training showed me I have skills I need to show and use. My organizational skills, communication skills, willingness to learn something new and work in a team were recognized by the employer in the fourth month, and enabled me to work the next couple of months.



During the program and after I became a volunteer in several non-governmental organizations, acquired many friends, I was a part of many success stories in the city and

become richer by many beautiful moments and a lot of new experiences. Currently I cannot imagine my life without volunteering or being a member in the NGO, or the participant in activities that contribute in changes in my town.

**Dejan Rađen (Volunteered with School Students during Global Youth Service Day)**

At first sight I was attracted by stipends. I think this was attraction for many people in the beginning, but this brought me and others new friendships and life improvements. This is something I did not expect to happen. Stipend for me made influence to my life that I became aware of having my own money and being responsible for it. These skills I use now every day in my life. This program changed my life; I became much more communicative, I develop my confidence and communication skills that I thought I will never have.

The field work made me learn some basic tool skill, and made me to think that great people are talking about ideas, but they become great when ideas are implemented. Youth Building Futures in Brčko District changed my opinion on differences in society, made me thinking on ethnic differences, I also realized that gay is OK. Group work made me less credulous; I realize how to build trust with group. One of the problems of my community is ethnic tension. I make difference between people on good and bad, but many people make these differences according to religious and ethical issues. This project changes my opinion on these issues and I hope other people will start to think this way.

If you ask me what is the best for me in the program I would say fourth month of the program when I attended art school and improve my skills in painting and drawing which is my great passion.





## Snapshot of PMP Outcomes

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	INDICATOR DEFINITION AND UNIT OF MEASUREMENT	TARGET	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
1.1. # of multi-ethnic teams of marginalized young people created/established.	Definition: Tangible community improvements in the Brčko district built by engaging multi-ethnic teams of marginalized young people, to include out-of-school, secondary school non-completers, and unemployed, ethnically mixed and of mixed gender. Unit: # of created/established teams.	Up to 8 multi-ethnic teams established.	8 multi-ethnic teams established in Brčko and surrounding communities.	
1.2. # of reconciliation and advisory structures established or strengthened with USG assistance that engage multi-ethnic and marginalized young people in conflict mitigation and reconciliation processes.	Definition: The established advisory structure will be the Youth and Adult Advisor Council (YAAC), to be comprised of 6 male and female representatives and 5 adult advisory members (on behalf of Mayor's office, Employers association, members of local communities) aimed to promote the YBFD project; oversee the selection of youth participants and community service projects; and facilitate exit opportunities for project graduates to jobs, internships, further training, education and entrepreneurial opportunities. Unit: # of structures created.	1 YAAC established	1 YAAC established	
1.3. # of USG-assisted community improvement projects geared towards strengthening understanding and mitigating conflict between groups.	Definition: Increased public understanding and awareness among community members on conflict mitigation. Unit: # of successful community improvement projects to increase public awareness among community members about the YBFD conflict mitigation model.	12 community improvement projects	Repaired and upgraded 23 sports and children playgrounds Upgrade of 11 elementary and high school facilities One new children's playground built in the heart of Brčko's city park	
1.4. # of people reached through USG-assisted facilitated	Definition: Increased public understanding and awareness among community members on conflict mitigation.	500 people in Brčko District reached.	.441 youth increased awareness; 43,000 local citizens	

community improvement projects to support strengthening the understanding and mitigating conflicts between groups	Unit: # of reached population or % of increased public awareness among community members about the conflict mitigation and/or YBFB conflict mitigation model.		witnessed YBFBD activities and community projects	
2.1. # of people trained in conflict mitigation/resolution skills with USG assistance	Definition: Increase the economic security of unemployed youth through 4-days a week over 4 months of basic education, employment training, entrepreneurship education, community service work, leadership and life skills development, and psycho-social counseling. Initial 3 months will be split between classroom based instructions and on-site community construction, while 4 <sup>th</sup> month will include specialized training, entrepreneurship training, internships and apprenticeships. Unit: # of young people trained.	320 young people trained (60 young people between the ages of 16 – 28 will be engaged in five 4-month cycles totaling 400 young people of which 320 will complete training)	441 young people trained; 388 completed the four months training.	
2.2. # of people participating in USG-assisted reconciliation activities conducted and completed with the participation of two or more conflicting parties	Definition: Advancing community awareness on conflict mitigation measures through concrete reconciliation activities. Unit: # of people participating in reconciliation activities	320 young people of mixed gender and ethnic background.	.441 young people of mixed gender and ethnic backgrounds completed the project.	
3.1. # of community improvement projects completed with USG assistance that provides work experience and skills training.	Definition: Increase the economic security of unemployed youth through benefits of cooperative, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, community building for conflict mitigation, reconciliation and prevention. The community reconciliation projects will include weatherizing and upgrading homes for elderly and vulnerable residents, controlling erosion through riverbank stabilization, building playgrounds and bike	12 community improvement projects	Repaired and upgraded 23 sports and children playgrounds Upgrade of 11 elementary and high school facilities One new children's playground built in the heart of Brčko's city park	

	paths, planting trees and other improvements. Unit: # of reconciliation projects.			
3.2. # of people reached through completed USG supported life skills training.	Definition: Increase the economic security of unemployed youth through benefits of cooperative, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, community building for conflict mitigation, reconciliation and prevention.  Unit: # of people reached.	320 people reached	441 people reached through USG training.	
3.3. # of students participating in USG-supported activities that demonstrate the positive impact of a project through the demonstration of tangible, practical benefits in view of placement options.	Definition: Advancing economic security and livelihood options of graduates through concrete post-program placement options. Unit: # of graduates pursuing and receiving placement options	200 graduates receiving concrete placement options such as jobs, internships, self-employment, further training, volunteer positions in NGOs.	280 graduates received internships, apprenticeships, further training, NGO placements or jobs	
4.1. # of staff and volunteers from local partners trained to implement the conflict mitigation model.	Definition: Advancing the capacity of local partners to manage and sustain conflict mitigation and community awareness on conflict mitigation measures through concrete reconciliation activities aimed at testing, evaluation and codifying the conflict mitigation model to be expanded to other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Unit: # of local partners trained	12 staff and volunteers trained from partner NGOs	10 staff and volunteers trained.	
4.2. # of technical assistance resource materials adapted for the program	Definition: Advancing the capacity of local partners to manage and sustain conflict mitigation through concrete ToT programs aimed at testing, evaluation and codifying the conflict mitigation model to be expanded to other parts of BiH. Unit: # of programs implemented.	2 resource materials adapted	3 resource materials adapted: student handbook; program handbook; leadership poster.	
4.3. # of new	Definition: New relationships	At least 5 new	12 new	

relationships made with community/business/government entities	with community/business/government entities that have provided monetary contributions to sustainability of conflict mitigation model. Unit: # of new relationships.	relationships	relationships with public and private sector partners.	
4.4. # of public events to disseminate lesson learned, innovations, effective practices	Definition: Total value of contributions and donations from domestic individual and institutional sources among selected partners Unit: # of events	2 public dissemination events.	2 public events to disseminate program information and engage partners	Nearly \$100,000 in cost share generated by the project.
4.5. # of monitoring mechanisms established with USG assistance	Definition: New monitoring mechanism established within partner NGOs to provide for sustainability of conflict mitigation model and its expansion throughout BiH. Unit: # of monitoring mechanisms.	1 monitoring mechanism..	1 M&E system established for the project along with a Student Tracking System, Facebook page and other social media to track responses.	



## **Challenges and Obstacles**

### Conflict on Multi-Disciplinary Teams

Every project has its challenges and troubles, but YBFBD was especially smooth and trouble-free thanks largely to the expertise and capacity of CSD and PRONI—both experts in key elements of the project. The project team managed YBFBD effectively despite occasional struggles between the vastly different organizational cultures of the two implementers. The conflict that can get generated among different organizations with different missions is well-known to YBI since all its programs are multi-disciplinary undertakings. The staff of YBFBD did not escape these frustrations and difficulties, but they approached them with professionalism, flexibility, and creativity so that this dynamic did not interfere with the project.

### Challenges of Private Sector Engagement

Another challenge was engaging the private sector in the project since the themes of corporate social responsibility are not widely held in the region. As a result, project staff spent considerable time in reaching out and cultivating local partners for the project. This effort—especially by the COP—paid off by the end with the project generating more than \$70,000 in local cost share. By the end of the project private sector stakeholders along with the municipal offices were eager to support the project in any way they could.

### Entrepreneurship Training Must Include Business Financing

The business development training struggled for two reasons: first, there was a cultural bias against entrepreneurship with many students disparaging the idea of self-employment. Self-employment was equated with criminal activity or subsistence work and was not viewed as credible, viable livelihood activity; second without the incentive of business financing for the actual development of enterprises it was difficult to motivate even the most interested youth. YBI's companion program, Youth Eco Leadership Corps, provided 12, \$1000 business grants to winners of a business development competition and these resources generated great interest in entrepreneurship. With such an incentive, YBFBD, struggled to sustain interest in this training.

### Gauging the Youth Responses to Inter-Ethnic Conflict

The program and the accompanying evaluation never got a clear sense of the true feelings of young people toward the tensions and conflict within society. Many youth voiced a lack of interest in dividing citizens by ethnicity and an expressed an openness to all cultures. These young people often said employment was everyone's main concern. Still other young people, in interviews and surveys did recognize the need for a reconciliation program and explained that their perceptions had changed based on their experience in YBFBD. It seemed that some participants genuinely did not harbor ill will toward other ethnic groups. At the same time other participants explained that social tensions were very real, present, and problematic.

## **Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

### Greater Emphasis on Livelihoods

Regardless of the many troubling social, political, and cultural issues in BiH, it is clear that young people overwhelmingly need help with employment. There is a need for a much more robust effort to build bridges into the private sector and self-employment and to dispel the widely held belief that the public sector is the only place to find a “real” job.

### Community Asset Building Motivates Young People

The activity most highlighted by participants in the evaluation is community asset building. This YELC component engaged and mobilized young people who were idle but seeking a way to “plug in” to their communities outside of political activity. The YELC community asset building opened their eyes to the benefits of social action, volunteerism, and community service to both participants and to beneficiaries.

### BiH Needs a National-Scale Youth Engagement Program

The intertwined trends of youth discouragement, youth marginalization, and youth unemployment do not bode well for the future of BiH. The frustration that young people voice over local politics, local media, outdated attitudes, political corruption, and economic stagnation is intense. And while disempowerment and resignation are common themes in the attitudes of youth in BiH, history has shown that eventually this passivity will give way to potentially devastating action. There is a window of opportunity open now to positively engage youth to help build BiH into a productive, peaceful member of the EU. A large scale youth program based on national service, community asset building, employment training, non-partisan political activity, environmentalism, or other themes is urgently needed and would produce countless benefits for youth, their communities, and the nation.

USAID and the project staff welcomed citizens to the new YBFBD playground



## Epilogue: YBFBD Graduates Take Action to Provide Flood Aid

### **Biljana Todić, Brčko District; YBFBD graduate, young economist, unemployed**

As a person who is free and able to help, I couldn't sit and watch the people suffering by floods. I went to the Youth Center where the Red Cross moved for these purposes and offered my help. Since that day I am always busy on the move, in supermarkets in the city, collecting food, hygiene products and supplies for children. It's hard to watch the sadness in people's faces who had everything until yesterday and now nothing, and who have come to ask for a piece of bread or slippers because they remained barefoot. I can't describe that. Every child who left his home without a toy and the sadness and joy when we give them a new toy or a new jacket is too shocking for me. Each story made me cry and other volunteers, the natural disasters that befell the people of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia are one big accident that united the region. People in one hour lost everything that they gained for years. Some people refused to leave his/her property because they could not leave the animals. This is a huge tragedy and sorrow.

### **Armin Mustafić, Brčko District, YBFBD graduate, teacher,**

Floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia are catastrophic and horrible. Most difficult is the fact that many lives are in danger, their homes, animals. Positive thing is that all ethnic borders and interests are deleted, and people show humanity. I wonder did we need this disaster to actually connect again, helping each other, not to check who is who. I wish that this flood take away all evil and bad things and keep what we showed these days, unity. I volunteer and help because I think it is necessary and important, humanity is most important now. We need to show that we care.



### **Bojan Gavrić, Lopare, YBFBD graduate, technical engineer, unemployed**

Why I help now? Because I love my country. Because I cannot sit at home watch TV and do nothing about it. Because it can happen to anyone regardless nation, ethnic and religious background. Because it is human thing to do. And because I am sick of those sitting in cafe bars young and strong doing nothing but complaining.

**Maša Baćanov, Brčko District, YBFBD graduate, student of economy**

Although my family and I aren't victims of floods I felt the need to help rest of the people who are. I would like that someone else would do the same for me if I get in that situation. It is great experience to see all of us united and willing to help. I can't help with money but just being with those people and giving them any kind of support and help I think will be helpful.

**Dea Jovanović, Brčko District, apprentice in Brčko District Government**

I think the trouble is the one thing that still, after all, connects all people, without distinction. I decided to help those in need, my home is dry and warm, and there are people who have lost everything. For many of them, a smile means a lot in the bad moments like this. That's why I am here.

**Milena Gavrić Lopare, YBFBD graduate, makeup artist**

The catastrophic floods that happened in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which many people lost homes, and their lives, have launched many humanitarian actions. People who are unable to provide any kind of assistance, like food, water, clothes, shoes, or are doing other things like making embankments on the rivers. These days, I participated with a group of citizens, so that we have collected food, water, clothing and some basic hygiene articles for the most vulnerable residents flooded in Lopare. We are continuing to collect aid for the surrounding cities that were facing same problem in the floods.

**Azra Fazlić, Brčko District, YBFBD graduate, volunteering in NGO PRONI**

Fear, impotence and suffering all around us. Floods, which began before seven days still don't stop. A big part of population in Bosnia and Herzegovina lost their homes, lose everything they had. No better situation in neighboring states, and that strikes fear into bones. All good people are united to help to all those in need and all are hopeful that this nightmare will end as soon as possible. I am just one small part of it, and happy to be here for them. Today I spent part of the day with this boy giving him clothes, and telling him everything will be OK.

**Mirsad Zahirović, Brčko District, YBFBD and YELC graduate, Youth Club leader**

To help is to be human. People are in need, I think it could be me. This forces me to get up and to do something about it. We do not know what tomorrow brings. It could be us asking for help in same situation. When you see honest tears of these people, fear, pain and sadness you have to help. All this gives me hope for better future, to become better man, and to be happy with what I have. Life is about small things. Human life is more important than any other material thing ever.

**Haska Hamzic, Brčko District, YBFBD graduate, social worker, unemployed**

It is sad that we find ourselves in this situation in town. People lost everything that they have, gained all of their lives. Young people feel fear what happens after, when rivers go back. What tomorrow brings? Being one of those people with fear of tomorrow I decided to help someone does tomorrow and offered help and give small donation. Today I feel unity. I wish that everyone who can give something gives aid do that, because now is most important to be sensitive and caring to others. Only that way we can start new morning, new homes, and new friendships.



**Edna Čepić, Brčko District, YBFBD graduate, apprentice in Brčko District Government**

I do not know how to describe this, it is breaking me down, that I cannot help more to these people. Thank God there are good people in this town helping all the time. Simply put it is very difficult situation, to describe. We just need a lot of will, strength and love that we see these days and if it stays with us we can overcome this disaster together.

**Siniša Pavlović, Lopare, YBFBD graduate, physical education teacher**

I am one of these people sitting in cafe bar with friends and someone said that Red Cross needed help in putting sand in these bags. We left coffee and went there to help. I was surprised with team spirit we had, working together, eating together. There was about 100 people helping that first day. This humanity and unity is amazing and motivating.

## **Attachment #1: Overview of Training Curricula**

The project “Youth Building Futures in Brčko District” is designed to mobilize and inspire young people to become socially responsible citizens, to provide personal employment and to promote healthy family life.

The classroom curriculum of the program had six modules, each taking four days, six hours per day. The curriculum covered the following topics:

- *Conflicts Resolution*
- *Customer Service*
- *Time Management*
- *Life and Social Skills - communication*
- *Leadership*
- *Civic Activism and Civil Society*
- *“Yes, It’s Your Job, to Get a Job” - how to write CV and job application*
- *Entrepreneurship*

### ***Conflicts Resolution and Peace Building***

Conflict resolution was central to the program. This module had the aim to make students realize and learn how to professionally deal with conflict situations, with special focus on the conflicts within the working team or with service users. The module enabled students to explore their relationship to conflict situations, and how to solve them. Much of the module encouraged students to explore, on a personal level, their conception and perception of daily life conflicts and perceptions and attitudes of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The module contributed to the development of personal attitudes to conflict situations, conflict triggers, and peace building strategies.

### ***Customer Service***

This module gave students the chance to develop interpersonal skills and communication skills to deal with customers in professional and effective ways regardless of their future job. The module introduced the concept of customer service and enabled students to better present their work, organization or company. Students got a clear picture of how to be helpful, professional, attentive, and efficient.

The module aimed to introduce students to a base of professional and interpersonal communication to improve individual and teamwork in a job setting.

### ***Time Management***

This module brought students learning opportunities on how to be well self-organized at work within a team or individually. The module gave students the ability to develop personal skills and knowledge in the field of self-organization and motivation, group work, planning and management. The module enabled students to recognize what is the best way to learn how to apply these methods of learning, and how to use new technology and available resources for better self-management.

### ***Life and Social Skills***

This module is based on the individual needs and made to meet specific needs of students as individuals and groups. The purpose of this module is for each individual to understand their role in society, place where he or she belongs, learn life skills such are communication, self-reflection, assertiveness, group work, etc. Training is designed to develop their own attitudes in

working with diverse groups.

Primary goal of this module is to strengthen the role of the individual in society and to encourage young people to become active factors of society.

### ***Leadership***

The module on leadership gave opportunity to students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to improve their leadership skills, such as public speaking, group facilitation, persuasive writing, planning and management, team work, advocacy and negotiation. Drawing on YouthBuild's definition of leadership, "Taking Responsibility to Make Things Go Right for You, Your Family, Your Community, and Your Country," they worked on a research projects in teams and assessed their own leadership skills. In this module, students also studied evaluation practices and used of session plans. Students examined and discussed the different styles / types of leadership in the context of working on projects in their communities, as well as processes in groups.

### ***Civic Activism and Civil Society***

This module focused students on civic activism and civil society to both increase leadership and civic engagement AND to help them see civil society as a potential opportunity for work. This module also enabled students to gain skills on lobbying and negotiation to implement their own ideas. Students got a broader picture of how they can to network with other relevant associates and through some common ideas and projects affecting the changing social trends. This module is primarily focused on the fact that the students can create their own ideas on community improvements, develop project plans and media strategies, approach funders, and mobilize supporters.

### ***Yes, It's Your Job***

This module was designed to develop students' knowledge in the field of active job searching, using innovative methods such as social media to search for work and to acquire the specific skills required for employment. The module encouraged improved communication skills and taught students to take greater initiative in searching for work. The module gave students skills to cope with the stress of a job search. Students wrote CVs and resumes, practiced interviewing, and learned about labor market trends that effect employment. Students analyzed existing strategies, shared experiences in the searching for work, and helped each other to try new and innovative methods of job search.

### ***Entrepreneurship***

This module sought to cultivate entrepreneurial instincts in participants to both launch new enterprises, but also to foster more initiative, innovation, perseverance, and creativity in building livelihoods. For some students it enabled them to develop ideas for services or products and starting their own business.

This module served as the starting point for getting to know basic business concepts, business terms and concepts, such as value, marketing, financial planning, competition etc. In this basic course students learned the essential facts and concepts relating to the business research and planning. They reviewed detailed financial reports, learned relevant legal terminology and the obligations that must be fulfilled to get a business started, as well as other technical aspects of the developing, planning, registering, launching, and maintaining a business.

***Peer Peace Builders Curriculum***

This two week curriculum invited a hand-picked group of graduates to advance their skills to become skillful promoters of peace and nonviolent communication in everyday life and community challenges. The purpose of this module was to create facilitators within the community who can engage their peers in dialogue, reflection, experiential learning, and events that support peace building and interrupt inflammatory activity. The group practiced group facilitation techniques, peer counseling skills, and other approaches to effective group process. The intent is to build a highly skilled and knowledgeable group of community facilitators who can be local resources to facilitate meetings, workshops, presentations, and other events with their peers.

The program gave a chance to students to do personal reflection and group dialogue on conflict triggers, conflict resolution, and peace building. During this module students met with veterans, war prisoners, and organizations dealing with conflict and peace building.



## **Attachment #2: Details on the Individual Cohorts of Participants**

### GROUP A (first group)

Sixty students were accepted in the program (50% male and 50% of female), fifty five completed the training. According to the students tracking system 12 students continued their higher education, 17 students are employed, 3 students are in enrolled in the government apprenticeship program, 3 is volunteer in the local NGO, and 11 students are engaged in other activities (honorarium jobs, development hobby, non-formal education, etc)

### GROUP B (second group)

60 enrolled (45% male and 55% female), 53 students completed the training. According to the student tracking system, in the reporting period, 23 students have continued their higher education, 11 are employed now, 2 students are in apprenticeship programs, and 4 volunteers in the local NGOs, and 15 are engaged in other activities (honorarium jobs, development hobby, non-formal education, etc).

### GROUP C (third group)

This group enrolled 62 young people (62% male and 38% female), 51 completed the program. According to the student tracking system: 15 students have continued higher education, 2 are in government apprenticeship program, 13 are employed, 15 students volunteer, and 16 students are engaged in other activities.

### GROUP D (fourth group)

66 enrolled (43% male and 57% female), 54 completed the program. In reporting period all students' information were updated to Students tracking system. According to the student tracking system: 24 students have continued education, 10 are employed, 9 students are volunteers, and 9 students are engaged in other activities.

### GROUP E (fifth group)

67 enrolled (53% male and 47 % female) 63 completed the program. In reporting period all students' information were updated to Students tracking system. According to the student tracking system: 21 students have continued higher education, 1 student is still in high school, 13 are employed, 7 students are volunteers, and 20 students are engaged in other activities.

### GROUP F (sixth group)

67 students are enrolled (57% male and 43% female). In reporting period all students' basic information are recorded in students tracking system. According to the student tracking system: 32 students have continued higher education, 2 students are still in high school, 4 are employed, 1 student is volunteering, and 21 students are engaged in other activities.

### GROUP G (seventh group; Gradacac&Pelagicevo area)

27 students are enrolled (63% males and 37%female). According to the student tracking system: 1 student has continued higher education, 6 students are still in high school, 5 students are volunteering, and 13 students are engaged in other activities.

### Group H (seventh group; Lopare&Celic area)

32 students are enrolled (47% males and 53% female). According to the student tracking system: 2 students have continued higher education, 2 students are still in high school, 1 student is volunteering, and 16 students are engaged in other activities.

### Attachment #3: Graduate Placements in Work and Internships

YBFBD PLACEMENTS IN WORK AND INTERNSHIPS			
			Ststus: May 31st, 2014
No.	STUDENT	JOB POSITION	EMPLOYER
1	Adis Milkić	bricklayer	Bijelić gradnja
2	Boro Ilić	Coordinator	Trka za život NVO
3	Diana Radeljaš	fitness trainer	Zvrk
4	Dino Hasić	manager	club CLICK
5	Dženana Mujić	saleswoman	butik Shery
6	Edina Mešković	nurse	Dom Zdravlja Brčko
7	Emela Eminović	salesgirl	Ciciban
8	Erna Karasuljić	promoter of the Violeta brand	tržni centri u Brčkom
9	Gorica Maričić	surveyer	IPSOS
10	Jevto Ilić	coordinator	EPA
11	Mirza Ibrišimović	seller	Debi
12	Naida Mešić	saleswoman at the bookstore	Svjetlost
13	Zoran Bogdanović	coordinator for prevention of drug addiction	PRONI
14	Aleksandar Mičić	soccer judge	sudi na utakmicama
15	Alen Agić	administrator	design office
16	Amela Hodžić	nurse	Dom Zdravlja Brčko
17	Eldina Čerimović	administrator	Brcko District Government
18	Emir Dedić	caffee co-owner	Angels&Devills club
19	Igor Đokić	lecturer	Akademika
20	Maja Jović	youth worker	Omladinski klub Donji Brezik
21	Milica Baćanov	administrator - part time job	Omladinska zadruga Brčko
22	Nikola Stjepanović	waiter	caffee Queen
23	Senada Rendić	administrator	Employment office Brčko
24	Aleksander Đukanović	waiter	Lacosta
25	Alen Husetović	singer	caffee bar Dandy
26	Danko Davidović	seller	Radić promet, Lončari
27	Edna Čepić	accountant	d.o.o. ZZ Brka
28	Irena Knežević	psychologist	school Obudovac
29	Milan Ristanić	Coordinator of the project	NVO Vermont Brčko
30	Miloš Popić	consultant	NVO Svitac
31	Mirza Hurić	driver	d.o.o. Krajnović
32	Omar Ahmetović	waiter	Premier
33	Sladana Kojić	accountant	money exchange Merkator
34	Željko Garić	waiter	Gornji Pub
35	Biljana Jevtić	Economist	d.o.o. Željo komerc
36	Dragana Milošević	assistant of the Director	Lider Nekretnine i Edukacija
37	Dragoslava Đukić	administrator	Accounting office
38	Elvir Kadrić	manufactures furniture	Oglavina
39	Igbal Mujić	waiter	Ritchie, coffee bar

40	Jasmin Delimerović	seller	pharmacy Jovanović
41	Jelena Trivunčević	kindergarten teacher	Sreća
42	Jovana Kljajić	saleswoman	FIS Brčko
43	Siniša Miroslavljević	waiter	coffee bar Queen
44	Zoran Jovanović	cameraman	HIT Tv
45	Adrijana Ristić	Economist	TAF KOMERC
46	Aldin Medilović	waiter	coffee bar Jazzwa
47	Cvjetko Nikoić	waiter	Donji Pub, Brčko
48	Jelena Bursać	Psychologist / Consultant	YBFBD
49	Ljubinka Gavrić	saleswoman	online cosmetics
50	Mirza Lišić	seller	Zaki mobile, Plazulje
51	Aleksandar Jovanovic	selfemployed	agriculture
52	Ana Vreta	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
53	Armela Halilovic	seller	Shop in Maoca
54	Azra Hadzajlic	seller	Beckary Palma Brcko
55	Dzenana Mujkic	seller	Boutique Shery
56	Edin Rejzovic	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
57	Emina Sabanovic	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
58	Admin Salihovic	waiter	Lounge Club Europe
59	Dina Muminovic	economist aprentance program	Brcko District Government
60	Elvira Adzikic	jurnalist	24hBrcko portal
61	Irma Hasanbasic	cofounder of NGO	Omladinski pokret za preokret
62	Negra Trobradovic	babysitting	
63	Sanela Mujkanovic	seller	Shop Center Azija
64	Zlatko Filipovic	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
65	Dea Triunovski	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
66	Ernest Junuzovic	photographer	Foto Rajfa Brcko
67	Žarko Balorda	economist aprentance program	Brcko District Government
68	Admir Čivić	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
69	Adnana Džaferovic	aprentance program	Brcko District Court
70	Amela Miščić	seller	Carpet shop Tepih Centar
71	Armin Mustafic	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
72	Jasmina Salihovic	aprentance program	NGO Vermont Brčko
73	Almir Tursić	waiter	Cafe bar Jazzwa
74	Asmir Zečić	selfemployed	DJ
75	Cvijeta Ristanić	selfemployed	Makeup artist
76	Goran Lazarevic	aprentance program	agriculture shop Agripet
77	Ivana Nikolić	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
78	Jelena Bursać	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
79	Marijana Džombić	info officer	Student desk European University
80	Milan Prelić	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
81	Nina Letić	aprentance program	Brcko District Police
82	Panto Bašić	seller	Zdravlje Pharm
83	Renata Ružić	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
84	Ana Stević	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
85	Emina Hajdarević	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
86	Emina Selimović	seller	Fast food Baron




87	Ivana Jović	aprentance program	NGO Vermont Brčko
88	Marko Marjanović	waiter	Cafe Park
89	Milan Plavšić	aprentance program	Brcko District Government
90	Slađana Maričić	aprentance program	Brcko District Social Center
91	Gordana Bijelić	selfemployed	Makeup artist
92	Siniša Pavlović	Teacher	school Lopare


## Attachment #4: YBFBD Branding and Recruitment Material







**USAID** | BOSNA I HERCEGOVINA



Млади граде будућност у Брчком дистрикту БиХ  
Youth Building Futures in the Brčko District

**ŽELIŠ DA POMOGNEŠ SEBI,  
SVOJOJ PORODICI I  
ZAJEDNICI U KOJOJ ŽIVIŠ!?**

PRIDRUŽI SE PROGRAMU

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U BRČKO DISTRIKTU BiH

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- STICANJE TEHNIČKIH VJEŠTINA I DIPLOMA IZ RAZLIČITIH OBLASTI POSLOVANJA
- MJESEČNU STIPENDIJU ZA UČEŠĆE U PROGRAMU
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- OZBILJNA I POSVEĆENA
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Program implementira:  
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PRONI Centar za omladinski razvoj  
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## Attachment #5: Materials Developed: Student Handbook in Local Language





## Attachment #6: Evaluation

### Youth Building Futures in the Brčko District An Evaluation of Project Implementation and Impact



#### Evaluators:

Dr. Paul Aaron  
Svetlana Kijevčanin

February 2014

## 1. Executive Summary

Youth Building Futures in the Brčko District (YBFBD) represents an ambitious and innovative approach to nurture seeds of peace and stability within a locale of unique strategic importance. What happens there will help shape the fate of BiH as a whole. The Dayton Accords, which brought peace to Bosnia, assigned Brčko a special status as an independent enclave under international administration. This was meant to safeguard the city and surrounding municipality from power grabs by either of country's two territorial entities, i.e., the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation) and Srpska (RS). Within such a safe space, inter-ethnic co-existence and good governance might take root and spread. Towards this end, significant strides have been made since 1999. But hard-won progress is today threatened by spillover from political dysfunction and economic crisis affecting the rest of the country. In the face of such challenges, a vital task at hand is to shore up Brčko's collective resilience.

This is what YBFBD aims to do. It tests out a multifaceted strategy of intervention aimed at advancing five main goals:

- Making visible material improvements in the infrastructure of the Brčko district;
- Engaging multi-ethnic teams of marginalized young people;
- Enhancing the economic security of unemployed youth through expanding their repertoire of technical skills, through strengthening their capacity to collaborate as part of a team, and through buttressing their motivation to improve themselves and their communities.
- Demonstrating the benefits of cooperative, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, community building for conflict mitigation, reconciliation, and prevention;
- Testing, evaluating and codifying a model in the Brčko district that could be expanded to other parts of BiH.

The project deploys 400 jobless young men and women from different ethnic backgrounds to upgrade local schools, repair low income housing, and improve communal play areas. The production of such tangible assets serves as an end in itself as well as a catalyst to a broader process of personal and social revitalization. Through hands-on cooperative engagement on behalf of the public good, youth participants overcome sectarian barriers, recast attitudes towards gender, forge a sense of joint purpose, enhance employability and civic competence, and provide a visible example of solidarity in action.

Funded through USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM), the project operates on the ground as an alliance between YouthBuild International (YBI) and two Brčko-based implementing partners, PRONI and Center for Sustainable Development (CSD). The project's design principles and value propositions are drawn from a domestic US model that YouthBuild as shown to be highly effective over the course of thirty five years of grassroots practice in low-income communities across America.

During the last decade, YouthBuild has achieved a global reach, with adaptations successfully customized to meet the needs of young people in eleven different countries. Taking note, CMM included YouthBuild in its "tool kit" of programs that can help address the drivers and dynamics

of conflict: “Youth, who are never integrated into community and social structures or who never acquire the skills needed for peaceful and constructive adult, lives are at high risk. A deprived, frustrated, or traumatized youth cohort, if left without help, can continue to foment conflict for decades.”

Drawing on intimate first-hand knowledge of Brčko and Bosnia, YouthBuild and the other members of the design team concluded that principles of pluralism, inclusion and cooperation were best taught by deed rather than by word. The living example of Serb, Bosniak and Croat youth working as a team to serve the public interest would yield significantly greater dividends than any number of didactic seminars on tolerance and peace building. Following this logic, the project left out references to "reconciliation" in its recruitment and marketing materials. Instead, pride of place was granted to grassroots community practice.

An independent team of evaluators reviewed the project at two separate points: first, after the end of its initial contracted 24 month cycle operating within the ethnically mixed city Brčko; and second, after USAID approved an eight-month extension for an additional 100 participants drawn from Brčko and four small mono-ethnic communities (Čelić and Lopare; Gradačac and Pelagićevo) situated on either side of the dividing line between the BiH Federation and RS.

The evaluation team examined the project's underlying conceptual premises and theories of change; took stock of what the initiative proposed to accomplish and what it actually achieved; assessed which components proved most robust and which less so; and came up with suggestions for how the YB approach might be refined and improved.

Data gathering took place via a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. These included on-site interviews with participants, project staff, municipal officials, private sector employers, community beneficiaries, and local media; written surveys; scrutiny of internal project archives and reports; and a literature review of publications from academia, government, and international organizations. The evaluators also brought to bear their own lenses honed over decades of research experience in the Balkans, much of it focused on youth and conflict.

The evaluation gauged YouthBuild's integrated problem solving approach to be well suited to Brčko's complex operational setting. Survey data indicate 91% of participants endorse the project's strategic relevance. Overall, the evaluation rated project implementation as smooth and efficient. In almost all instances, proposed performance benchmarks were met or surpassed. Participants upgraded skills and grew more confident in being able to influence their surroundings. While employment was never defined as an expected outcome, 17% of graduates found jobs; others have become active in public life, either through politics or NGOs. A majority of youth express feelings of increased personal and collective efficacy. Host officials and residents from localities where assets were built testify to both the symbolic and concrete value of work carried out. The project paved the way for more open dialog between youth and the office of the Brčko mayor. Public and private sector members of a Project Advisory Board report enhanced appreciation of youth as civic and economic assets. With support from the municipal government and the Local Employer's Association, the project garnered in-kind contributions of equipment and supplies that totaled nearly \$70,000. By the end of the project, local communities are on track to receive over 50,000 working hours from YBFBD enrollees, with an estimated value of \$115,626 (BiH minimum wage of \$2.31/hour).

The economy of Brčko has gained from revenues generated through project activities, i.e., stipends paid to participants; tuition going to local providers of specialized skills training; costs of construction materials used in community improvements schemes, etc.

For PRONI, the Center for Sustainable Development, and YouthBuild International, the project forged a tighter collaborative alliance, providing a more robust platform for a potential scaling up of efforts.

But the picture, while extremely positive overall, is far from simple. Along one important dimension (i.e., conflict; ethnic tolerance; commitment to co-existence) evidence of program impact proved difficult to establish. This reflects two factors. First, any shift in norms and values represents an evolving process that takes place over an extended period that goes beyond a four month program cycle. Second, it appears that YBFBD enrollees entered the program already open to “others.” Indeed, they seem to have self-selected based on such an orientation. This held true for youth participating in the initial phase as well in the eight month expansion.

One important factor that helps explain such a preponderance of progressive attitudes among participants is the role of PRONI, the local organization most involved in the outreach and recruitment process. PRONI brought a clear profile and long track record as a community-based activist and advocate on issues like human rights and youth empowerment. This served as a calling card to open minded and progressive young men and women; (and arguably as well as a filter which screened out youth less comfortable with diversity and more prone to nationalist leanings.) The project contributed to replenishing the storehouse of individual and organizational capital which Brčko and BiH as a whole must draw upon in order to create stable futures. Investments in the capacity of young people to get involved and make a difference paid significant dividends. A core group of competent and confident change agents stands poised to serve as a counterweight to sectarianism and civic apathy. But gains can easily dissipate unless they are reinforced. This requires follow on opportunities for development and support vis-à-vis livelihoods and civic engagement. Illustrative examples include:

- Training on research, advocacy, media, and grassroots organizing so that program graduates have a wider repertoire of tools needed to push for democratic change.
- Access to advice and to up-to-date information relevant to employment, market trends and market niches. A particular focus should be the untapped potential of the agricultural sector. This sector continues to be avoided by many youth because of a perceived lack of social prestige compared to professional or technical jobs—no matter that natural resources represent a competitive advantage and engine of growth in BiH.
- Upgrading of vocational skills, particularly in reference to construction, so that the gap becomes narrowed between employer demands and youth competencies.
- A physical setting which operates as a “one stop shop” or “Home Depot” where graduates can come to address multiple needs, where training activities can be conducted, and where entrepreneurial start-ups can be incubated.



## 2. Background and context

Understanding why YBFBD was launched, how it has been implemented, and what is at stake must be framed within a larger picture of the project's unique operational milieu.

Brčko sits on the banks of the Sava River separating Bosnia from Croatia to the north. Thirty miles east is the Drina River border with Serbia. A transportation hub and military choke point, Brčko was a prize that all three rival armies battled against each other to win. The city and the surrounding municipality saw horrific scenes of ethnic cleansing and mass murder.<sup>9</sup> Which side would gain control continued to be fought over at Dayton. So serious were the stakes and so deep the disputes among parties concerned that the treaty meant to end the conflict was at risk of going unsigned. To break the log jam, a decision was reached to dispense with the idea of partition altogether, and instead assign Brčko the status of a special District. Shared as a condominium between the two entities but under the auspices of neither, the enclave was to be governed by an international supervisory regime with broad administrative powers. Such a special district would oversee the physical and social reconstruction of a destroyed community, ensuring that former residents could return home and that citizens from different ethnic backgrounds enjoy equal treatment and equal opportunity.

Brčko rebuilt from ground zero. "The southern parts of town made it look as if the world had come to an end. Snow covered the ruins, which stretched as far as the eye could see. But what made the greatest impression was not what could be seen, but what the ear could not hear. There was absolute silence. Life always involves sounds: — a dog, a child, traffic on a distant road. But here there is nothing, just silence and ruins. There was nothing left at all."

This is the way Swedish diplomat Carl Bildt saw Brčko when it still bore the marks of vicious fighting, concentration camps, and mass abuse of human rights. What was once a wasteland has been transformed since the arbitration agreement went into effect in 1999. Schools, courts, the police force, and other local structures have been ethnically integrated; refugees have returned in significant quantities; mutual co-existence has put down roots; and a reputation earned as a stable and safe place to do business has helped lure jobs.

While substantial accomplishments have been registered, progress has stalled and in some cases been reversed. Expert analysts warn that "the District faces its greatest crisis yet." The Eurozone's financial downturn has spilled over into Bosnia, hitting hard what was already an economy in crisis. Poverty has grown more deeply entrenched; remittances from abroad, which long served as an essential resource stream, are drying up. Young people are saddled with rates of long-term unemployment that hover around 45%.

At the same time, international actors are more and more asking if their continued, high-level engagement may be reaching the point of diminishing returns, vis-à-vis not just Brčko but Bosnia. The handover of accountability to indigenous actors, along with funding cut backs, is likely to pick up. This process is dictated by a number of factors: competing priorities and

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<sup>9</sup> During the late spring and early summer of 1992, some three thousand Muslims ... were herded by Serb troops into an abandoned warehouse, tortured, and put to death. A U.S. intelligence satellite orbiting over the former Yugoslavia photographed part of the slaughter. "They have photos of trucks going into Brčko with bodies standing upright, and pictures of trucks coming out of Brčko carrying bodies lying horizontally, stacked like cordwood," an investigator working outside the U.S. government who has seen the photographs told us. ... The photographs remain unpublished to this day. (Danner, "Bosnia: The Great Betrayal," *New York Review of Books*, 26 March 1998.)

obligations on the part of bilateral and multi-lateral donors; and concern that the influx of resources (\$28 billion in BiH since 1995, with estimates of \$3 billion for Brčko alone) has habituated citizens and politicians alike to a culture of dependency. Given this critical juncture, how best to manage the tradeoff between an exit strategy that might leave a dangerous vacuum and a continued presence used by nationalist entrepreneurs to evade accountability and preside over a lucrative spoils system?

These questions underscore the complex challenge which USAID, the project funder, and PRONI, the CSD, and YBI, the three principle project implementers, are joined together in confronting. All the partners understand that there is no quick fix or sure bet. But they share a belief that young people in Bosnia comprise its best hope and those investments to strengthen their civic capacity and economic potential can yield dividends to peace building and conflict management over the long term.

### **3. Project description**

YBFBD embodies such an investment strategy. It represents a multifaceted intervention aimed at training and deploying jobless young men and women from different ethnic backgrounds to upgrade local schools, repair low income housing, and improve communal play areas. The production of such tangible assets serves both as an end in itself as well as a catalyst to a broader process of personal and social revitalization. Through hands-on cooperative engagement on behalf of the public good, youth participants overcome sectarian barriers, recast attitudes towards gender, enhance employability and civic competence, and present a visible example of what can be achieved when an ethnic-based

The project is designed to produce ambitious results achieved across a broad spectrum:

- Young people in Brčko acquire the necessary skills and competencies to reconcile gender and ethnic differences and increase economic security through jobs, self-employment and further education and training.
- Social trust among youth and adults, Bosnia, Serb and Croat women and men living in Brčko is increased
- Community reconciliation objectives are advanced and conflict mitigation competencies are acquired by young people
- Economic security and livelihood options are increased among undereducated, unemployed young people in Brčko
- The capacity of local partners to manage, facilitate and sustain conflict mitigation and community reconciliation activities will be increased

The project is broken into cycles. Each lasts four months; each convenes a cohort of 60 young men and women, aged 16-28, who are unemployed and from mixed ethnic backgrounds. The initial grant period ran for 24 months; this was extended by eight months. Over the entire span of implementation, 400 participants will be enrolled; the project has set a completion rate of 80%, or 320 graduates out of the total.

Youth are recruited via websites, television, radio and print. Outreach is also targeted to unemployment bureaus, social agencies, and NGOs. As with all YouthBuild programs, word of mouth proves the most common and effective tool; Activities run six hours a day for four days a week. Project content integrates basic education, employment training, entrepreneurship, community service, leadership and life skills development, and psycho-social counseling. Youth rotate between classroom based instruction and on site community construction. In the fourth month, youth choose and often help design a one month specialized experience matched to their learning interests and geared to the market environment. Options include skills training, internships, volunteer positions, or other work-based learning activities. Participants receive a modest stipend to support costs related to food and transportation.

Funded through USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) the project operates on the ground as a partnership between YBI and two key local implementing organizations. The first, PRONI, is a seasoned NGO with wide experience in youth development and human rights training; the second, CSD (Center for Sustainable Development), brings to bear expertise in environmental stewardship and "green" job creation. The project has also mobilized significant support from the Brčko District government as well as the District's private sector. The project's design principles and value propositions are drawn from a model that YouthBuild has shown to be highly effective over the course of thirty five years of grassroots practice in low-income communities across America. During the last decade, YouthBuild has achieved a global reach, with adaptations of its domestic experience customized to meet the needs of young people in eleven different countries.

Taking note, CMM included YouthBuild in its "tool kit" of programs that can help address the drivers and dynamics of conflict: ("Youth, who are never integrated into community and social structures or who never acquire the skills needed for peaceful and constructive adult lives, are at high risk. A deprived, frustrated, or traumatized youth cohort, if left without help, can continue to foment conflict for decades.")

#### **4. Evaluation purpose**

The program was originally contracted to operate over twenty-four months. An eight month extension was then added by USAID. Evaluators collected data at two points: at month twenty and again, at month thirty. The objective of this review is to take stock of the program and compare it to its original intent, specifically capturing the impact that has been made relative to the original goals and measures identified in the USAID Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). This evaluation will assess the strengths and limitations of the program and enable stakeholders to learn what components of the program are particularly successful and what components could be improved. The evaluation will also take an in-depth account of the program's impact to date on the participants' perceptions of self, youth leadership, and community development in the context of post-conflict BiH. A particular focus of inquiry will be the salience of an adapted YouthBuild model and the degree to which its core elements are responsive to local needs and local challenges.

## 5. Evaluation methodology and approach

Data gathering took place via a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in two cycles: one in January 2013, and another in November 2013. The first visit to Brčko included extensive interviews with participants from first four groups, project staff, municipal officials, private sector employers, community beneficiaries, and local media<sup>10</sup>; written surveys<sup>11</sup>; scrutiny of internal project archives and reports; and a literature review of publications from academia, government, and international organizations. In the second visit, the project already has been extended to two more groups from mixed municipalities: Lopare and Čelić and Pelagićevo and Gradačac. The evaluators also brought to bear their own lenses honed over decades of research experience in the Balkans, much of it focused on youth and conflict.

A total of 45 participants comprised the research sample: 23 participants of YBFBD were interviewed and filled out questionnaires the site first visit – January 2013; and 22 in the second round – November 2013,<sup>12</sup> Their ethnic background is presented in the tables below.

<b>Ethnic background of the participants interviewed in January 2013</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Bosniak/Muslim	6	26,0
Serbian/ Orthodox	9	40,0
Croat /Catholics	1	4,3
Macedonian	1	4,3
Undecided	4	17,4
No answer	2	8,0
Total	23	100,0

<b>Ethnic background of the participants interviewed in November 2013</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Bosniak/Muslim	9	40,9
Serbian/Orthodox	10	45,5
Croat/Catholic	3	13,6
Total	22	100,0

## 6. Evaluation findings<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>List of the participants interviewed in the first round is in Annex 2

<sup>11</sup> The questioner is in Annex 3 and Annex 3a from the second round

<sup>12</sup>List of the participants interviewed in the second cycle is in Annex 4

<sup>13</sup> Final Analysis of the data gathered by the survey is in Annex 5



## Relevance

- 91% of said that the project was relevant or highly relevant in the context of BiH. ("It is relevant because it promotes volunteerism, which is an unfamiliar concept to most; it helps you to see your own qualities and use them in a proper way and encourages you to make a change – no one else does that.")
- 56% said that the project responded to young people's main concerns, which they prioritized as unemployment; the absence of youth-oriented support systems; and passivity and disengagement among their peers. ("It showed us that you need to wake up, get outside the home and be active. No one is going to come knocking on your door and give you something...Everyone has a destiny but you have to go out and search for it.") ("There is no point in waiting for some miracle to happen...you have to make an effort")
- Asked to rank the most important components, 60% said "practical work" carried out in the context of hands-on community asset building. When talking about concrete results, participants referred to renovating urban space, upgrading buildings, making playgrounds for children, and renewing gyms and locker-rooms in schools; 43% listed classroom activities; and 34.8% possibilities for internships.
- 91% referred to the value of "making friends and expanding social relations" Changes were recorded in civic behavior and in self-efficacy. Whereas 78% of participants had no previous NGO experience, 69.7% now report being active in a local organizations. When asked if the project had "made you more confident and competent to *fight for a better life?*" 69% said yes. Respondents say they feel they are not alone in their struggle and they are part of a caring group. Informal education helped them to understand themselves better and improve their capacity to defend their opinion and persuade others.
- Such positive endorsement of the program's relevance was registered at the same time that 60% of those surveyed expressed a wish to emigrate. Focus groups indicated a pervasive dissatisfaction with the status quo, along with skepticism about the feasibility of democratic reform or popular resistance. These findings are consistent with research data collected over the recent past in BiH.<sup>14</sup>

## Effectiveness (progress towards objectives and results) and Impact

- 73% judged the YB model as effective or highly effective. ("The project gave young people useful knowledge (omitted in the formal education), enabled practical work, and jobs for some. It connected young people together from different backgrounds"). Respondents said that the project had triggered changes in their personal development (responsibility; self-confidence; flexibility; tolerance); in their set of skills (communication; team work, planning and organization); in their level of community involvement; and in the range and diversity of their friendships and social network. ("The

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<sup>14</sup>As GTZ's *Young People Need a Youth Policy* notes, 78% of young people are uninterested in politics and express a high degree of distrust of politicians, whom they find to be incompetent and corrupt. Youth membership in political parties or their youth branches is about 8%. In short, youth are disengaged from the political process, disillusioned with the political system and deeply distrustful of existing government institutions in BiH. (<http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/21213.html>)

project showed youth a way to struggle for their rights.") High rates of attendance and retention testify to the program's success in winning the allegiance of participants.

- Public and private sector members of a Project Advisory Board report enhanced appreciation of youth as civic and economic assets.
- With support from the municipal government and the Local Employer's Association, the project garnered in-kind contributions of equipment and supplies that totaled nearly \$70,000.
- By the end of the project, local communities are on track to receive over 50,000 working hours from YBFBD enrollees, with an estimated value of \$115,500 (BiH minimum wage of \$2.31/hour).
- Brčko-based implementing partners, PRONI and CSD, gained experience and enhanced capacity to forge coalitions, pool resources, and tackle large-scale, logistically complex projects. Each organization grew; each was stretched to take on new challenges, hone new skills, and go beyond "business as usual". For PRONI, with a track record of excellent work in the field of human rights and conflict transformation that spans back to 1997, this meant overseeing job sites, managing the production of tangible community assets, and working in alliance with the private sector and local government. For CSD, whose field of expertise was environmental technology and the green economy, this meant engaging around an agenda of youth development and civic action.

## Efficiency

Project partners planned and implemented activities around five main goals:

- Making visible material improvements in the Brčko district;
- Engaging multi-ethnic teams of marginalized young people;
- Enhancing the economic security of unemployed youth through expanding their repertoire of technical skills, through enhancing their capacities to solve problems, to take initiative and to collaborate as part of a team effort, and through developing a deeper sense of motivation to improve themselves and their communities.
- Demonstrating the benefits of cooperative, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, community building for conflict mitigation, reconciliation, and prevention;
- Testing, evaluating and codifying a model in the Brčko district that could be expanded to other parts of BiH.

The project has achieved a high degree of fit between what was committed to and what has actually been delivered. Outreach and recruitment; project orientation and launch; education, training and service work: these activities have all been rolled out on time. Performance measures have been met in terms of retention and attendance. Attrition has held between 10-12% from cycle to cycle.

The program met and in some cases surpassed numerical performance benchmarks. This held true for work projects; for advisory structures in which youth and adults gave input and feedback on program content and implementation; and for graduate placements into slots offering further training, internships, jobs, or opportunities for volunteerism.

Participants upgraded skills and grew more confident in being able to influence their surroundings. 200 graduates received concrete placement options such as jobs, internships, self-employment, further training, and volunteer positions in NGOs. 37 enterprises hosted students in the fourth month of the program, and 10 courses were offered for those who expressed need for additional education and specialization.<sup>15</sup> While employment was never defined as an expected outcome, 17% of graduates found jobs; others have become active in public life, either through politics or NGOs.

The programs' seamless implementation speaks to the diligence and commitment of staff attached to PRONI and CSD, the two implementing partners. It also represents a function of sufficient project lead time. This allowed logistical details to be worked through beforehand, beneficiary communities to be identified and brought on board, key gate keepers and stakeholders in government and business to be enlisted and groomed as active rather than ceremonial partners, and a month long process of recruitment and screening to be carried out in preparation for each four month cycle of project activity.

### **Conflict management and mitigation: Some caveats on evidence and impact**

Efficient implementation of activities does not always equate to easily measured impacts. This is especially true when a program's animating purpose is to trigger shifts norms, values and attitudes. With rare exceptions, such shifts evolve over extended periods and must be therefore tracked through longitudinal research. And when change does occur, the reasons tend to be intertwined and difficult to pick apart and extrapolate.

In taking stock of the achievements of YBFBD and in exploring what differences were made and why, certain caveats are prudent to bear in mind. As opposed to the pristine environment of a clinical setting in which it is possible to isolate variables, the real world operational context is messy and "contaminated." This makes it notoriously hard to tease out precise one-to-one correlations between inputs and outputs.

In some cases, it is less of a challenge. Take the example of a participant who during his fourth month was able to enter an advanced computer graphics training module, paid for by project. The costs were significant; at \$1000, they went well beyond the average fees budgeted for specialized course offerings. The end result was that the participant found a job whose requirements were directly met via the new skills he acquired. The relation between the project, the participant, the training, and the job is unambiguous. But given a domain as broad and complex as conflict management and mitigation, a stance of modesty is warranted in attempts to trigger, measure and account for changes in participant and community thinking and behavior.

To their credit, local implementers proceeded with realism. The project chose a strategic path that deliberately steered clear of tackling head-on the fraught issues of ethnic nationalism. Based on intimate first-hand knowledge of Brčko and BiH, they concluded that principles of pluralism, inclusion and cooperation were best taught by deed rather than by word. The living example of Serb, Bosniak and Croat youth working as a team to serve the

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<sup>15</sup>List of enterprises and courses is in Annex 6

public interest would yield significantly greater dividends than any number of didactic seminars on tolerance and peace building.

Following this logic, the project left out references to "reconciliation" in its recruitment and marketing materials. Instead, pride of place was granted to grassroots community practice. This was reflected in brochures, websites, posters, and direct, face-to-face meetings with potential enrollees. Taking into account the local milieu, there are solid grounds for arguing that full disclosure was unnecessary and even counterproductive and that the more subtle approach adopted by YBFBD operators represented a shrewd choice.

BiH and Brčko have been saturated by projects that revolve around conflict and its management, resolution, reconciliation, and transformation. Some good practitioners have done a solid job. But among many residents, there is cynicism that conflict has spawned a self-perpetuating industry where indigenous and international professionals organize workshops and seminars to train people to be tolerant and to respect "the other" but with few tangible results achieved on the ground.

The "pitch" to prospective participants as well as community stakeholders emphasized jobs, employability and the production of visible concrete public resources. As a strategic focal point, this aligned with the bulk of popular opinion according to which a failed and corrupted economic system constitutes the most immediate collective threat, not sectarianism or ethnic exclusivity.

Participant survey data suggest a wide spectrum of opinion about the nature and depth of conflict. Asked "how big is the ethnic divide in Brčko?," 35% said "small" or "non-existent," while 26% answered "enormous." But accompanying comments suggest that most respondents believe such divisions reflect efforts of politicians to distract focus away from problems shared by all three communities. Participant comments include,

- 'I'm fed up with this—normal people live normal lives: I decline to define who I am according to some box: I refuse to check whether I'm Serb, Bosniak or Croat.'
- "If people had jobs, none of this would matter: they would be too busy to think about nationalism."
- "The biggest problem is unemployment—these ethnic divisions are inspired by politicians—divide and conquer."
- "People have other priorities to take care of".
- "It is not important what is our ethnic background; we are all flesh and blood."
- "I think that ordinary people are fed up with these stories of divisions. Politicians impose these issues, because of greed and selfishness."
- "Ordinary people just want to work normally and earn a living."
- "Media has a great influence. We are constantly being bombarded with stories of conflict and division."

Asked to rank order factors that "undermine the possibilities of a decent future," participants put "corruption" in top place, followed by "politics and politicians," with "ethnic division" running a distant third.



Asked if the project had altered their perception of ethnic relationships and behavior, 91% said “no.” Follow up discussion suggested that many participants read this query as an effort to probe their own preexisting levels of tolerance. A certain measure of defensiveness may thus lie behind the near unanimity of denial. On the other hand, as has been suggested earlier in the report, the project's value frame was intuitively evident to applicants, even without any overt reference to conflict resolution in recruitment materials. Those who responded to media outreach and print ads and the larger number who learned of the program via their friends, (long experience has shown that “word of mouth” represents YoutBuild’s most effective marketing arm) were by and large youth who already espoused and practiced co-existence. PRONI’s reputation, one established over almost two decades of local involvement in defense of diversity, served to attract a particular clientele, one interested in a collective experience with socially compatible peers. This “brand” may also have served as a filter to screen out youth who harbored prejudice or stereotypes.

It proved beyond the scope of this research to explore whether asset building projects- improvement of recreational areas and school facilities, planting of trees, revitalization of urban landscapes, etc.- registered among community beneficiaries as products of a joint effort between multi ethnic youth.

Strenuous efforts were made by USAID to raise the visibility of project achievements and get local media to cover the story. A prime example is the opening of a modern and well equipped children’s playground in one of Brčko’s main parks, which drew the attendance of high level Embassy officials and of local dignitaries and stakeholders. Such events were part of an intentional campaign aimed at disseminating a powerful symbolic image of reconciliation in action. However, it remains unclear how these messages were absorbed by which audiences and with what effect

Even without robust evidence of impacts vis-à-vis conflict management and mitigation, the very fact that the program successfully established a base in cross-border communities (Čelić and Lopare; Gradačac and Pelagićevo) represents a noteworthy achievement. In contrast to the relatively cosmopolitan and resource rich urban environment of Brčko, where NGOs are commonplace and Bosniak, Serb and Croat children attend mixed schools, these mono-ethnic rural enclaves are isolated and insular, suspicious of outsiders, and virtually cut off from contact with communities just over the separation line that divides the Federation from the RS. Though remaining in close physical proximity to each other; (and in the case of Čelić and Lopare, actually belonging to the same municipality before splitting in half with the outbreak of war in 1992), they have come to regard each other as strangers rather than neighbours.

In an evocative phrase used by a number of project participants during focus group interviews, “a wall of China” has been constructed between communities that are only six miles apart. This psychological barrier keeps populations trapped in fear. “People from the other side drive through but never stop,” said one of the participants. “These are pockets of hate and prejudice,” commented another youth.

The project was able to recruit from both sides of the divide and to bring youth together that in most instances had little exposure to the ethnic “other.” The twinning of Lopare and Čelić went smoothly, with half of participants drawn from each locale. In the case of the other pairing

(Pelagićevo and Gradačac), implementation proved more difficult. Because of its remoteness and its lack of economic opportunity, the Serb town of Pelagićevo had undergone an exodus of its youth demographic. Recruitment efforts led to only six applications being submitted. Because of this shortfall, what was meant to be an evenly split cohort wound up being disproportionately comprised of Bosniaks.

Classroom activities were designed to forge a sense of shared purpose and collective trust. As a mental exercise, participants, for example, had to literally change shoes with each other. But it was working practice that provided the most important bonding experience. Here, in the context of joint effort to produce something that contributed to the common good, young people learned to cooperate and function as a team.

Solidarity built through action carried out between young people from divided and often adversarial communities represents an important aspect of managing and mitigating conflict. Informed judgement suggests the validity of this proposition, even in the absence of robust research data.

YBFBD received a number of site visits from a Cleveland-based construction manager with more than twenty years of YouthBuild experience. He was deeply impressed by what he saw: “Half men; half women; Serbs and Muslims whose parents could have been warring with each other; Everybody pulling their weight, cooperating to achieve something that added value to the other’s community; Taking initiative, being responsible, remaining focused and on task; Helping each other, supporting each other. No put downs. It was a unit, a prototype for the kind of joint venture that makes ethnic backgrounds beside the point. “

## **7. Conclusions**

YBFBD demonstrated that YouthBuild’s distinctive approach can be successfully adapted to an operational setting as challenging as Brčko and BiH. According to YB’s theory of change, young people learn to internalize a sense of personal and civic responsibility less via seminars and roundtables than direct, hands-on practice. Through taking on tasks that teach by doing, through contributing to the production of tangible outputs that improve the lives of others, young people gain a sense of personal and collective efficacy that makes them more resilient, persevering and engaged.( In the words of one participant,. “The project has empowered us: if capable and strong young people decide to move and take an action and to influence those who are decision makers, we can make many changes.”

Project experience validated this strategy. Drawn from the ranks of the unemployed, a large contingent of youth was put through an intensive four month cycle that integrated theory and practice, that built skills, enhanced feelings of competence and confidence and nourished a spirit of caring and sharing. The project encouraged young people to aspire and achieve. Some found jobs. Many were animated to join NGOs; some became more engaged in public affairs.

But structures of political and economic opportunity within young people seek to gain a foothold remain deeply unfair. Every day of their lives, the great majority of youth in Brčko and BiH experience the impact of such unfairness. Only a small minority believes that something can

be done to open up closed systems of power and privilege to effective scrutiny and eventually to tangible change. Youth have allowed themselves to be trapped within a vicious circle. Institutionalized corruption and nepotism provoke impotent rage; feelings of helplessness fuel disengagement; withdrawal serves to further entrench the rule of a narrow elite.

Four months of team building, of community work, of exposure to positive messages can boost hope and strengthen resistance to apathy and fatalism. The voice of a recent project completer testifies to enhanced resilience and resolve: “I have more enthusiasm for things I do and I got more inspired. I broadened my horizons and moved my boundaries. Youth need to take action in order to get the changes they want. The biggest problem in my community is uninterested young people. One of the things I learned is that we’ll be more successful if we are all together, in other words if we unite and learn how to function as one entity. Nothing is impossible if we really want to do something. I have a feeling that things slowly are getting in position to move forward.”

Yet beneficial effects are likely to dissipate, absent an organized effort to maintain some level of group cohesion and group focus. The task at hand and the challenge going forward is how best to engage project graduates so that the valuable human and civic capital they embody can pay long-term dividends rather than being squandered through neglect.

## **8. Lessons learned/barriers to success**

- Local organizational partners coming from different backgrounds and bringing different skill sets can work together in effective coalition. The alliance between CSD and PRONI provides a model. Such pooling of expertise and experience is more and more necessary. The NGO sector in BiH has begun to hollow out as the result of sharply reduced donor flows. Facing this crisis put a premium on the capacity to innovate and to collaborate.
- An adapted YouthBuild model proved itself strategically relevant to post conflict settings. The program can forge unity in action between youth coming from different ethnic backgrounds and can provide a visible symbol of joint enterprise to communities that in many cases remain divided across sectarian fault lines.

## **9. Recommendations:**

The project contributed to replenishing the storehouse of individual and organizational capital which Brčko and BiH as a whole must draw upon in order to create stable futures. Investments in the capacity of young people to get involved and make a difference paid significant dividends. A core group of competent and confident change agents stands poised to serve as a counterweight to sectarianism and civic apathy. But gains can easily dissipate unless they are reinforced.

This requires follow on opportunities for development and support vis-à-vis livelihoods and civic engagement. Illustrative examples include:

- Training on research, advocacy, policy dialog, media, and grassroots organizing so that program graduates have a wider repertoire of tools needed to push for democratic change. YBFBD assembled an effective and committed coalition of employers, local officials, and NGOs. This represents a potential platform for a scaling up of youth civic engagement. One illustrative example is preparation and distribution of a "youth friendly" municipal budget which lays out in clear, jargon-free language how resources are allocated. Power needs to be demystified; the discourse and practice of democracy must be made more accessible to young people so they can better contribute to building a decent future in which they have the greatest stake.
- Access to advice and to up-to-date information relevant to employment, market trends and market niches. A particular focus should be the untapped potential of the agricultural sector. This sector continues to be avoided by many youth because of a perceived lack of social prestige compared to professional or technical jobs—no matter that natural resources represent a competitive advantage and engine of growth.
- Upgrading of vocational skills, particularly in reference to construction, so that the gap is narrowed between employer demands and youth competencies. A study by GEA (2011) has shown that one of the consequences of emigration is evidence of shortage of specific skills in the construction industry, as people with these skills were attracted by opportunities in Croatia, Slovenia and Russia.<sup>16</sup>
- A physical setting which operates as hub and switch-point for experimentation and creative problem solving. David Burch, a long-time construction manager for YouthBuild who visited YBFBD on many occasions, envisaged a "one stop shop, a kind of Home Depot" that will serve for the delivery of skills training, the incubation of entrepreneurial start-ups, and the exchange of ideas and best practices on social change and youth development.

## 10. Challenges Going Forward

The main challenges can be clustered under the heading of 'sustainability'. Over the course of nearly two decades, the international community has devoted a treasure of human and fiscal assets to repair a wounded land and create a durable system of free markets and democratic institutions. While much has improved, there are still dangerous fractures and fissures that could crack open under pressure. Ultimately, whether Bosnia makes progress, stagnates or regresses depends upon the imagination, perseverance and moral bearings of its residents. Nonetheless, outside assistance, judiciously delivered, can add a missing piece. Recent USAID policy documents have underscored the cross-cutting role played by youth in social and economic development, democracy and governance, and conflict management and mitigation. YBFBD highlights the willingness of large numbers of young people in Bosnia to become involved and make a difference. As many young activists hit up against the limits to service and seek ways to exert more direct influence on politics and power, the project also makes a powerful case for additional training and support.

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<sup>16</sup>THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF EMIGRATION - European Commission  
[ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId...en](http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId...en)





58 Day Street, Somerville, MA 02144 USA  
[www.youthbuildinternational.org](http://www.youthbuildinternational.org)